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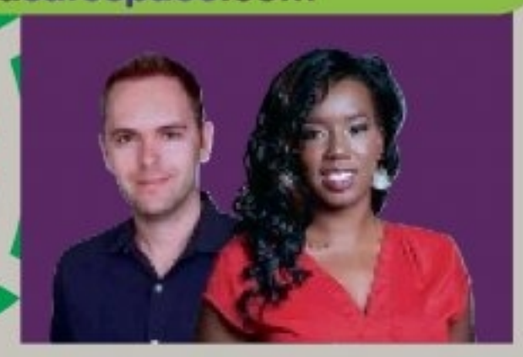

Your essential daily news | WEEKEND, APRIL 13-17, 2017 High 10°C/Low 6°C Rain

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Blind Vancouver travel writer enlisted by NASA to talk about workplace diversity

metroNEWS

Ryan Knighton at his Vancouver home on Wednesday.
JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO

Take injection site decisions out of federal hands: Vancouver Coastal Health

Where do the parties stand on housing?

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metro NEWS

Your essential daily news

Weekend, April 13-17, 2017

Metro will not be publishing Good Friday or Easter Monday. We will return on April 18.

Feds move too slow in crisis: VCH

OVERDOSE CRISIS

Consumption sites should be up to provinces: Medical chief

Matt Kieltyka
Metro | Edmonton

An ambulance makes its way down the alley behind Hastings Street in March. Vancouver has recorded 110 overdose deaths so far this year. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO

Not enough is being done to speed up critical decisions that can save lives a year into British Columbia's overdose crisis, according to Vancouver Coastal Health's chief medical health officer.

Dr. Patricia Daly and provincial health officer Dr. Perry Kendall were at Vancouver city hall Wednesday to brief council on the progress to date since Kendall first declared a public health emergency on April 14, 2016.

Last year, 922 people died in the province of illicit drug overdoses — three times the number of people who died in motor vehicle accidents.

A quarter of the way into 2017 and Vancouver itself has already recorded 110 overdose deaths, more than half of 2016's total for the city.

"Unfortunately, there is really no abatement in this crisis," said deputy city manager Paul Mochrie. "If anything, it's getting worse."

Asked what she'd recommend to senior levels of government, Daly said provinces should be able to set up supervised drug consumption sites and expand treatment options, such as prescription heroin, without approval from the federal government and Health Canada.

"These are a health service and should be a province responsibility," Daly said. "This is not just in B.C. Alberta would like consumption sites, Ontario would like it ... this process is far too cumbersome. Those kind of decisions need to be made at the provincial level, we'd be much more nimble if that were the case."

> **Those kind of decisions need to be made at the provincial level, we'd be much more nimble if that were the case.** Dr. Patricia Daly

Kendall told council he agreed.

Vancouver Coastal Health currently has two applications filed with Health Canada for supervised injection sites for the Downtown Eastside.

In the meantime, the province has opened up more than 20 so-called overdose prevention sites in response to the crisis without the federal government's consent.

Daly said there hasn't been a single overdose death at Insite, VCH's emergency mobile medical unit or any of the prevention sites during the crisis.

"Any, even though the number of overdose deaths in December and January were really high — 94 in Vancouver over that period — we think it would have been even higher had we not had the mobile medical unit or overdose prevention sites in place," Daly said. "We're quite certain that those services prevented deaths."

Daly said VCH will continue to push forward with opioid substitution therapies and expanding treatment options in 2017, along with its current emergency responses.

"That will be our biggest need going forward," she said. "We will continue to do what needs to be done. We will continue with overdose prevention sites. We will open new supervised consumption sites and we will continue with naloxone."

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Where do parties stand on housing?

How easy will it be for you to buy a home or find a place to rent if the BC Liberals, NDP, or Greens are elected?

BC votes 2017

Jen St. Denis
Metro | Vancouver

As NDP leader John Horgan promised a $400 a year tax credit for renters, B.C.'s former minister responsible for housing was committing to help homeowners with a tax credit of up to $20,000 to create rental basement suites.

Rich Coleman, BC Liberal candidate for Fort Langley-Aldergrove, made the comment during a panel event organized by the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver in New Westminster on April 12.

Coleman appeared with David Eby, the BC NDP's candidate for Vancouver-Point Grey and the party's housing critic, and David Wong, the BC Green candidate for Vancouver-Hastings.

Coleman defended his party's record on the housing file, saying the Liberals have focused on directing social housing funds toward the most needy, introduced a 15 per cent foreign buyer's tax to calm property speculation in Metro Vancouver and will devote $703 million to offer no-interest down payment loans to first-time homebuyers.

But with Metro Vancouver's homelessness rate up 30 per cent over three years, tent cities increasing and record low rental vacancy rates not just in the Lower Mainland, but in smaller B.C. cities like Victoria, Kelowna and Kamloops, "we're not doing so well," on housing either the very poor or middle-income earners, Eby said.

WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

AGREEMENT

All the candidates agree that denser housing needs to be built, especially near transit hubs, and that developers face too many delays in getting permission to build from municipalities.

Single family houses in Vancouver's Arbutus Ridge neighborhood. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO FILE

RICH COLEMAN | BC LIBERALS

- Expand an existing home renovation tax credit to up to $20,000 to help homeowners add a rental suite to their home. Coleman says this will increase rental supply and help homeowners pay their mortgage.
- Build 5,000 more units of affordable housing as part of a three-year, $855 million spend on social housing. While a group of B.C. housing advocates has called on the province to spend $700 million a year over the next 10 years on new social housing supply, Coleman said he had not yet read their proposal.
- After home prices soared as much as 40 per cent between 2015 and 2016, the BC Liberals introduced a 15 per cent tax on foreign buyers for Metro Vancouver properties.
- A few months later, the government introduced an interest-free home loan program to help first-time buyers get into the market.

CHAD HIPOLITO/THE CANADIAN PRESS

The program applies to properties under $750,000.

- Continue existing social housing and rent assistance programs.
- Coleman says tenants are already adequately protected by B.C.'s rent law, but he has committed to close the fixed-term tenancy loophole landlords are increasingly using to evade rent controls.

DAVID EBY | BC NDP

- $400 a year tax rebate for renters, similar to the $570 homeowner tax grant available to owners of homes worth up to $1.6 million.
- Increase protections for renters, including forbidding landlords from using renovations as an excuse to evict tenants and sidestep restrictions around rent increases.
- Allow municipalities to zone areas where only rental buildings can be built.
- Keep 15 per cent foreign buyers tax, but add a 2 per cent property tax surcharge to property owners who do not make their income in Canada or keep the home vacant. Use the proceeds of both taxes to build more affordable housing, but the party has not yet released spending numbers.

JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO FILE

- Change existing rules to allow universities and colleges to borrow to build student housing to free up off-campus rental supply.

DAVID WONG | BC GREENS

- Raise property transfer tax rate from 3 to 12 per cent for homes over $3 million.
- A tax on a home seller's lifetime capital gains over $750,000.
- Expand foreign buyer's tax to entire province and increase from 15 to 30 per cent.
- Phase out homeowner grant and replace with a system of income-based grants starting in 2019.
- Partly using the proceeds of the tax hikes, spend $850 million a year building and renovating social housing.
- Change B.C.'s rental legislation to control rent increases and protect tenants from "renovictions," "demovictions" and misuse of fixed-term tenancy agreements.

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The interstellar storyteller

CREATIVE WRITING

'What is a blind guy from Canada going to tell NASA?'

David P. Ball
Metro | Vancouver

Ryan Knighton, a creative writing instructor at North Vancouver's Capilano University, truly never expected being enlisted by NASA.

But the travel writer and author of Cockeyed — a memoir about his experience of becoming blind as an adult — is headed to Florida to speak before the space agency next Tuesday.

"It struck me as incredibly funny," he told Metro, laughing. "Like, what is a blind guy from Canada going to tell NASA?

"I have nothing to do with space."

The invitation to lecture researchers and other staff at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center took off thanks to his 2012 appearance on the immensely popular This American Life podcast.

On the episode, Knighton recounted a distinctly North Vancouver experience: nearly having a run-in with a bear on campus. Except he was a blind man carrying his young daughter on his back. (It turned out she was yelling, "Bear!" about a teddy bear she'd dropped).

"It was a story ultimately about being a blind dad raising my daughter, and she had to learn that I couldn't see," he recalled. "It's an interesting moment learning the consciousness of another person — imagining the world from another point of view."

Ryan Knighton is a creative writing instructor at North Vancouver's Capilano University will be giving a lecture at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Centre thanks to his appearance on popular podcast, This American Life. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO

The organizer of Goddard's leadership colloquium speaker series told him there was no need to relate his talk to space, science, or exploration in any way. They were particularly interested in the importance of workplace diversity.

"'Just do what you do,'" the NASA staffer told him. "'You don't need to try to speak to the space-like people.'"

She even sent him a detailed breakdown of Goddard's own demographics, and he was surprised that seven per cent of employees identified as disabled. He decided he'd share his ideas on different points of view.

"We typically think of diversity issues in the workplace as accommodation — how to accommodate people with physical differences and other very practical concerns — but we don't want to erase the differences of points of view," he mused. "In some ways, the friction of differences is where a lot of interesting stuff happens."

As a frequent travel writer, he explained, his unique point of view as a blind man means that run-of-the-mill vacations can turn into wondrous, thrilling or terrifying adventures. The East Vancouver resident was recently sent by a magazine on a safari in Zimbabwe, where he ended up walking through the bush — "the scariest thing I've ever done" — and hearing one of the "rarest sounds on the planet," a brawl between a pack of hyenas and a pack of African wild dogs.

"It sounded like an alien war," he quipped.

Other speakers in the Goddard Exploring Leadership colloquia series include a thinker on gender and technology and an IMAX cinematographer.

"They're not even necessarily tailoring the talks to subjects that seem relevant to NASA," Knighton said.

"I make my career as a writer out of trying to figure out where I am. And I think that's probably one of the most fundamental questions NASA asks about where we are in the universe and what's out there."

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NDP Leader John Horgan smiles during a campaign stop in Vancouver on Wednesday. A provincial election will be held on May 9. DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

NDP vows yearly $400 rent rebate

BC Votes 2017

But Liberals say the rich don't need it

British Columbia's Liberal government has ignored renters for the past 16 years and it's high time someone offered them a helping hand, New Democrat Leader John Horgan says.

Horgan said that as premier he would introduce an annual $400 renter's rebate if his party wins the provincial election on May 9.

"The message from the B.C. NDP today is that help is on the way," Horgan said Wednesday during a campaign stop in downtown Vancouver.

He said the proposed rental subsidy would apply across the province and be available to all tenants, regardless of income.

"If homeowners can have a homeowner grant, renters should be able to have a grant as well."

The soaring cost of home ownership has been a high-profile issue in B.C., and the provincial government has responded by creating several policies aimed at curbing real estate prices, including a 15 per cent buyer's tax on non-Canadians and non-permanent residents.

A homeowner grant provides a $570 break in property tax to people who own homes worth less than $1.6 million.

Premier Christy Clark increased the grant's eligibility threshold from $1.2 million at the start of this year after a dramatic increase in the assessed value of homes, which would be taxed at higher rates.

Speaking in Burnaby on Wednesday, Clark criticized the NDP's proposal, saying a rent credit would line the pockets of wealthy tenants who may live in penthouses in downtown Vancouver.

"That isn't right. We shouldn't be redistributing our tax money to the very rich," she said, adding the province already provides a rental subsidy to more than 100,000 low-income renters.

Housing advocate Kishone Roy welcomed the NDP's proposal, calling it a first step to addressing affordability issues.

> **If homeowners can have a homeowner grant, renters should be able to have a grant as well.**
> John Horgan

Roy, chief executive of the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, said the grant would make a difference for people who have seen their rent go up.

But he said the New Democrats should consider adding a rental rate cap to the credit, similar to the homebuyers grant, so it remains focused on lower-income earners who need it the most.

Roy is also behind a new strategy outlined by the BC Rental Housing Coalition, which calls for a significant increase in rental and affordable housing development, adding he'd like to see the New Democrats and other parties support it.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

RECREATION

Grouse Grind trail centrepiece of new park

Jeff Hodson
Metro | Vancouver

The uber-popular Grouse Grind hiking trail will soon be part of a regional park.

On Wednesday, the Metro Vancouver regional district announced the creation of the new 75-hectare park on the southern slope of Grouse Mountain.

The park — situated on land that has been owned by the Greater Vancouver Water District (GVWD) for more than 85 years — will also include the B.C. Mountaineering Club trail and a portion of the Baden-Powell trails.

"The new regional park, on the slopes of Grouse Mountain, will protect a unique ecosystem for generations to come, while providing visitors with world-class outdoor recreation experiences," said Port Coquitlam Mayor Greg Moore, chair of the Metro Vancouver board, in a press release.

Metro Vancouver entered into a long-term licence agreement with the GVWD and worked with Grouse Mountain Resorts in the creation of the new park.

It will open officially with the annual opening of the Grouse Grind in May or early June. The popular 2.9-kilometre trail is still closed for the winter season and will open following spring maintenance.

The Grind was created in the 1980s as a conditioning trail for climbers and has gained notoriety around the world with several hundred thousand users annually.

> **The new regional park ... will protect a unique ecosystem for generations to come.**
> Greg Moore

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Scandals that follow you, literally

BC Votes 2017

Liberals join in donation scorn with truck that tailed NDP bus

David P. Ball
Metro | Vancouver

Perhaps you've heard of political scandals like Watergate, "Elbow-gate" or British Columbia's own "Rail-gate" and "Bingo-gate."

But what about "tail-gate?"

During the second official day of electioneering on Wednesday, the B.C. New Democrats' John Horgan found his party's campaign bus closely followed by a large truck bearing a shadowy image of the opposition leader and a message to voters.

The B.C. Liberal stunt drew attention to the largest political donation in the province's history, under lax laws that place no legal limits on how much people, corporations or unions can contribute to parties — even allowing out-of-country gifts.

"NDP hypocrisy: $672,576," the truck proclaimed. "Horgan rakes in largest donation in a single year in B.C. political history."

The figure referred to last year's total contributions from the United Steelworkers, a U.S.-based international union with roughly 40,000 members in Western Canada, according to the BC Federation of Labour.

"Steelworkers and their families have a lot at stake in this election," stated regional director Stephen Hunt in a release. "Christy Clark leads an anti-union government that has consistently made decisions that have hurt workers, their families and communities.

"We've lost over 35,000 forestry jobs, and log exports are at a record high. We've seen temporary foreign workers hired over British Columbians in mining and we've seen the health and safety of workers tossed aside so Christy Clark's financial supporters can make more money."

It might seem odd that the Liberals are raising the topic themselves, particularly because earlier this week Clark deflected Metro's questions about whether donations influence decisions — something Democracy Watch has likened to "legalized bribery."

After controversy over reports that the B.C. Liberals received donations from corporate lobbyists who were illegally reimbursed by their clients, the RCMP's Sensitive Investigations Unit opened a probe that's still ongoing. The province has itself appointed a special prosecutor on the issue.

The anti-Horgan billboard was rolled out the same day as Democracy Watch had a hearing before the B.C. Supreme Court in a lawsuit over B.C. Liberal donors with heavy U.S. ties.

The court challenge is trying to force Clark's party to reveal fundraising activities of Kinder Morgan and its backers. The Texas-based firm's Trans Mountain Expansion project was approved earlier this year.

"Premier Clark and the cabinet ministers were in an apparent conflict of interest when they approved the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline in January," Democracy Watch said in a statement, "because of the more than $550,000 donated by pipeline-connected companies to the B.C. Liberal Party in the past five years."

Controversy has also arisen over a $60,000 payment from a U.S.-based trophy hunting "SuperPAC" lobby group, which was given to Canadian lobbyists for their election campaigning against the anti-grizzly-hunt NDP.

Democracy Watch founder Duff Conacher said regardless of whether such donations — even legal ones — come from outside Canada or from unions or companies, the effect on democracy is "corrosive."

"(We) called on B.C.'s provincial political parties to make clear, strong election promises to make ... world-leading changes to the province's political donation system," Conacher said in a release.

"Democracy Watch called on the Special Prosecutor to prosecute everyone before election day that the evidence shows participated in an illegal donation scheme and called on Elections B.C. to release an audit on likely illegal donations, also before election day."

The lawsuit was adjourned Wednesday until May 3. The provincial election will be held May 9.

A B.C. Liberal-sponsored truck labels the NDP's criticism of large corporate and union political donations "hypocrisy" as it followed John Horgan's campaign bus around Vancouver on Wednesday. CONTRIBUTED

> We've seen the health and safety of workers tossed aside so Christy Clark's financial supporters can make more money. Stephen Hunt

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Homes are a right, not an asset

OPINION

The province didn't just transfer vacant buildings, they moved people

The Vancouver skyline as seen from the west end. Area resident G. Peters writes about life in her social housing apartment after B.C. Housing sold the building she lives in to a non-profit housing provider. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/FOR METRO

The Auditor General, the media, the government and the non-profit housing providers called it a "transfer of assets."

They're talking about my home.

The B.C. government didn't just transfer a piece of land or some vacant buildings; they transferred people.

I'm referring to the auditor general's report released March 30 about the social housing the government sold to non-profit providers.

In the case of Sunset Towers, a publicly-owned and operated apartment is now owned and operated by a private charity called More Than A Roof, which was originally an arm of the Mennonite Central Committee.

The MTR Foundation website states their housing portfolio, located in 11 communities around B.C., is valued at $110 million. According to an article in the Mennonite Brethren Herald (2013), MTR was started 30 years ago by two Christian real estate developers.

As part of its mission MTR partners with other Christian organizations such as the Columbia Bible College which supplies volunteers to spend time with MTR tenants.

Since taking over the building, MTR delivered notices to every apartment informing tenants, among other things, they operate dry buildings, are switching over to non-smoking and changing to a no-pets policy.

Sign-up sheets for Bible study were taped up in the elevator and lobby. It's optional and if another tenant had put them up it wouldn't bother me, but Bible study classes from your landlord is a different matter entirely.

When I asked a staff person about the dry policy — a term associated with the prohibition era that literally means no alcohol — he said the policy did not include alcohol.

Perhaps the biggest change happening to the building and the tenants is economic.

BC Housing has limits on income in order to be eligible to live in their housing. The income maximum will be raised to $66,000 a year. The building is entirely made up of very small bachelor and one-bedroom apartments. With rent-geared-to-income it follows that the higher the income, the higher the rent. The annual income on B.C. disability is $12,000 a year.

We live in a city with high levels of poverty, swelling homeless counts and an opioid overdose crisis. People are living and dying on our sidewalks and in our alleys and doorways.

Simultaneously we have become world renowned for our staggeringly expensive and out-of-most-people's-reach housing costs and our equally expensive and out-of-most-people's-reach politicians.

So where does the transfer of publicly-run housing to private non-profits fit in this?

Will these transfers help address the problems of poverty and homelessness? What is the plan?

The auditor general suggests no one in government seemed to have bothered to ask, let alone answer, these and other important questions.

Passing through the lounge the other day, I saw mostly elderly women, sitting at a table with one of the green-shirted staff, who kept scanning the room. I felt uncomfortable, as if I was being monitored and now lived in a "care" facility not an apartment building. If pornography is something you know when you see it, pity and judgment are something I know when I feel them. (Also, I am not a senior citizen and do not require or wish to live in a care facility.)

But for those women there is history. This is the second time the B.C. government made a dramatic shift in their housing without consent or involvement or support or planning.

I wasn't living here then but around 2009, (coincidentally around the time leading up to the Olympics), when the need to make Vancouver look nice for company spurred public officials into action. Some people were moved directly off the street into a building that had previously been predominantly seniors.

Word is those who were unhappy last time are mostly happy with the change this time — they see it as a reset to what they had before.

Even the margins has its margins.

Lately I haven't seen much of the louder, sports watching/commentating group of tenants that yelled hello and told me the score whenever I passed through the lounge. I hope they still feel welcome.

The role of social housing should be to pull people in from the margins and make sure none are left outside. But as long as housing is seen as an asset, to be traded and shuffled about, instead of as a home and a human right, many humans and many rights will be sacrificed.

> **As long as housing is seen as an asset, to be traded and shuffled about, instead of as a home and a human right, many humans and many rights will be sacrificed.**

G. PETERS IS A DISABLED PERSON ON PROVINCIAL DISABILITY BENEFITS LIVING IN THE WEST END

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Sexual misconduct policy vote in UBC

EDUCATION

Furore over mishandled complaints prompts move

The University of British Columbia is set to vote on a new sexual misconduct policy in the wake of allegations it mishandled complaints against a PhD history student and former creative writing chairman Steven Galloway.

The board of governors will vote on the policy Thursday and if it passes, UBC will become the latest school to implement guidelines ahead of a May deadline set by the B.C. government.

"Putting together a policy is definitely a part of healing," said Genevieve Cruz, a graduate student who helped write the document. Cruz, president of the Graduate Student Society and a member of the history department, said the community was deeply affected by complaints that the university delayed taking action on multiple reports about a PhD student.

"The sense of community, of safety, was suddenly a question on everyone's minds. There is an effect to the UBC community when something like this doesn't get addressed."

The new policy would establish centralized sexualized violence prevention and response offices at UBC's Vancouver and Okanagan campuses. The offices would receive reports, refer complainants to support services and, if requested, provide information about the investigation process.

Directors of investigations would also be hired to review reports within 14 days and decide whether the university has jurisdiction. THE CANADIAN PRESS

UBC has been hit by a wave of scandals. THE CANADIAN PRESS

MARIJUANA

B.C. anticipating federal weed law

After decades as a marijuana renegade, British Columbia is eagerly anticipating the federal government's bill legalizing marijuana. Growing marijuana has become a backyard tradition in B.C. and the number of medical marijuana dispensaries in Vancouver and Victoria rival Tim Horton's outlets.

Politicians, entrepreneurs and ordinary citizens are convinced marijuana offers unprecedented economic, social and health opportunities as Ottawa gets ready to introduce its legislation.

Vancouver-based Tantalus Labs, which grows medical marijuana in greenhouses, released a report this month that said the industry could create 15,000 jobs in B.C. It said B.C.'s illegal marijuana market provides 40 per cent of Canada's black market and is worth $2.7 billion, with 85 per cent of that going to organized crime.

Dan Sutton, executive director at Tantalus, said he's worried B.C. is lagging behind Nova Scotia, Ontario and Alberta in developing a legal marijuana industry and could lose out.

"B.C. bud is a household name, globally," said Sutton. "We have a storied cultural history associated with cannabis and it's time for us to leverage that brand."

None of B.C.'s provincial political parties have touted marijuana legalization in the May 9 election campaign, he said.

NDP Leader John Horgan said he supports legalization. "I've been thinking about it a lot," he said in a recent interview. Horgan has studied marijuana policy and the opportunities from legalizing the drug.

> **We have a storied cultural history associated with cannabis and it's time for us to leverage that brand.**
> Dan Sutton of Tantalus

Last year, he sent two of his most senior caucus members, Carole James and Mike Farnworth, to Washington and Oregon to view how those states implemented and adapted to legal marijuana use and sales.

"We need to be prepared here in B.C.," Horgan said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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BC Votes 2017

Green Weaver

For Andrew Weaver, BC Green leader and climatologist, politics is a science

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Andrew Weaver was teaching a class of University of Victoria undergraduates about climate science and public policy when he realized he needed to do more than just lecture.

The internationally recognized climate scientist, part of a team that shared a Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore, often asked students whether the present generation owed anything to future generations.

They agreed their grandchildren deserved an Earth free of the worst impacts of climate change. But when asked whether they voted, they said their votes didn't count or that politicians were all corrupt.

"You have the power to change the system," he remembers telling students. "If you're not engaged in it, you have no one to blame but yourself."

But Weaver could only say those words for so many years without taking action himself.

He had spent decades contributing to science that proved climate change was real and it was primarily human-caused.

Weaver had advised former Liberal premier Gordon Campbell on his groundbreaking climate plan, which included Canada's first carbon tax. But he watched as politicians from all sides attacked the plan.

When he was asked a fourth time to run by former Green leader Jane Sterk, Weaver said yes.

He didn't expect to win in Oak Bay-Gordon Head in 2013, but he became the first Green elected to the B.C. legislature. He is a prolific writer of private member's bills that have sometimes attracted Premier Christy Clark's support, including a proposal to ban mandatory high heels for restaurant servers.

Although he doesn't see politics as a career path and has called for term limits for legislature members, Weaver has a knack for the political game. Despite leading a third-place party, he's managed to grab a disproportionate amount of media attention.

Weaver's friends say he is unusual in politics because he makes decisions based on evidence rather than on partisanship. Elizabeth May, the federal Green party leader, said she was stunned by how well he spoke to voters.

"I was realizing, 'Good heavens, Andrew's actually going to be good at this,'" she recalled with a laugh. "I was kind of worried: Could a scientist make this leap? Science, in some ways, is kind of the opposite of politics. You have to be evidence-based."

In fact, it appears his scientific background has shaped his entire approach to politics. May recalled a controversy surrounding a company that had been issued a permit to dump contaminated soil near Shawnigan Lake on Vancouver Island.

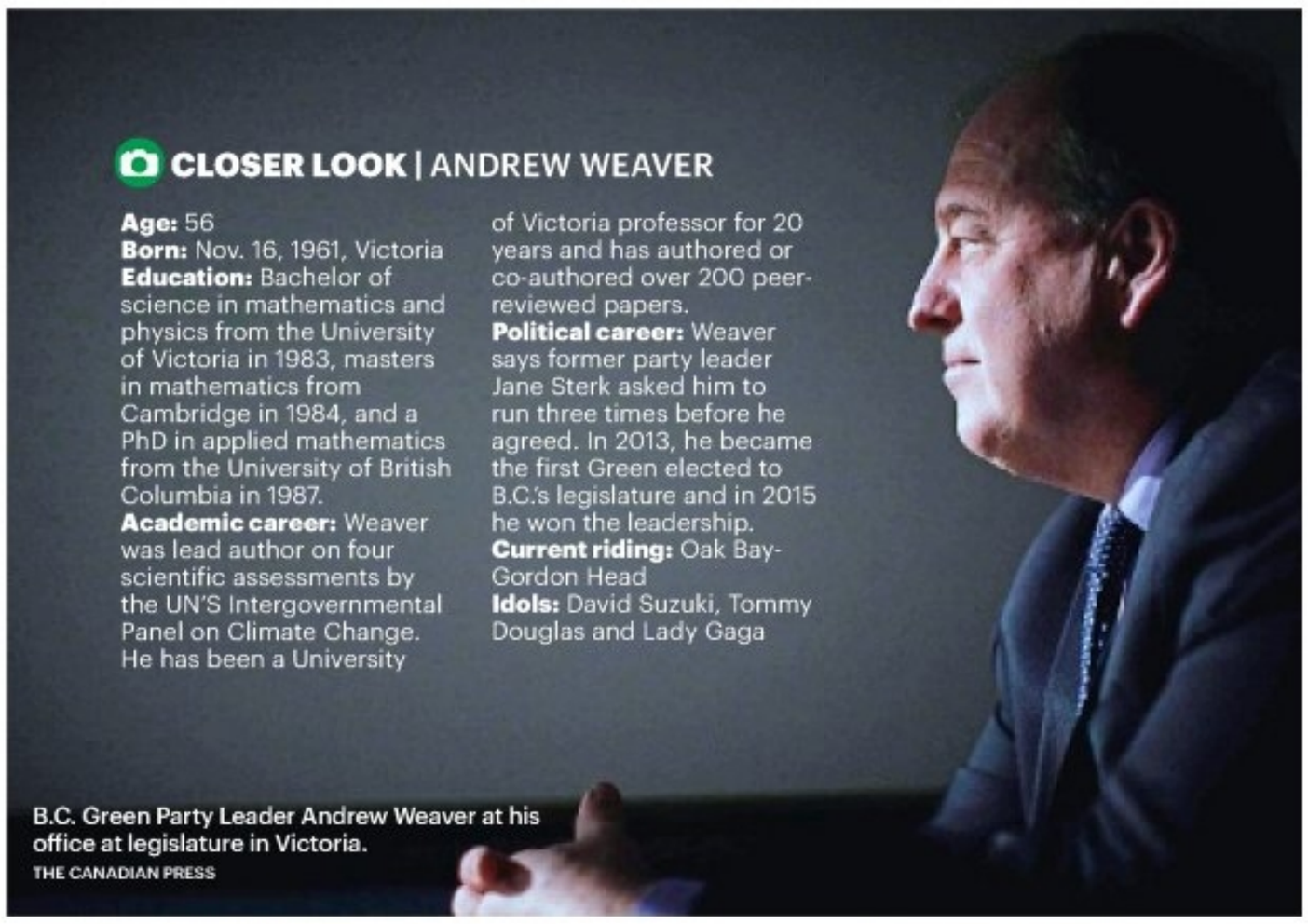
"What does a scientist do? Picks up his test tubes, goes to Shawnigan Lake and tests the water," May said.

Weaver found elevated levels of heavy metals, although the Environment Ministry said their testing never showed it above the legal limit. After years of community opposition, the province cancelled the permit in February.

Weaver said his scientific training has shaped how he works with staff and candidates. He doesn't micro-manage them, he said, because the secret to success in science is to surround yourself with smart people and let them go.

CLOSER LOOK | ANDREW WEAVER

Age: 56
Born: Nov. 16, 1961, Victoria
Education: Bachelor of science in mathematics and physics from the University of Victoria in 1983, masters in mathematics from Cambridge in 1984, and a PhD in applied mathematics from the University of British Columbia in 1987.
Academic career: Weaver was lead author on four scientific assessments by the UN'S Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He has been a University of Victoria professor for 20 years and has authored or co-authored over 200 peer-reviewed papers.
Political career: Weaver says former party leader Jane Sterk asked him to run three times before he agreed. In 2013, he became the first Green elected to B.C.'s legislature and in 2015 he won the leadership.
Current riding: Oak Bay-Gordon Head
Idols: David Suzuki, Tommy Douglas and Lady Gaga



B.C. Green Party Leader Andrew Weaver at his office at legislature in Victoria.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Liberal Leader Christy Clark toasts after serving tea to supporters during a campaign stop at a Korean restaurant in Coquitlam on Wednesday. A provincial election will be held on May 9. DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

'No shrinking violet'

BC votes 2017

Christy Clark has tasted her share of sweet political victory

It was the lure of ice cream that first drew Christy Clark into politics.

As a child, the future premier of British Columbia would accompany her father as he knocked on doors around Burnaby during his several attempts for public office.

"He'd promise us ice cream," Clark, 51, said in a recent interview.

"Hi, will you vote for my daddy?" she laughed, miming knocking on a door. "Who's not going to vote for a candidate, or who's at least not going to say something positive?"

Since then, Clark has enjoyed the sweet taste of her own political victories. She is leading the B.C. Liberal Party in its bid for a fifth consecutive election victory after she pulled off a come-from-behind win in 2013.

Beyond her father's political ambitions, Clark's family played a powerful role in shaping her approach to life and politics. Political debate was a mainstay around the dinner table.

"The only way for me to survive and succeed was to fiercely fight for what I believed," said Clark, the youngest of four children. "I learned that at a very, very young age. If you didn't cover your plate, somebody would eat your food."

Clark would apply those lessons during her time in student government at Simon Fraser University, which she said was "the nastiest politics I've ever been involved in."

She corralled a cohort of right-of-centre students to "break the stranglehold" the left had on the school's student society. Clark won by a razor-thin six votes, but was later disqualified after forgetting to pay a small fine because she failed to remove campaign material.

Andy Tomec, who covered Clark's run at student politics for the campus newspaper, remembers her as a consummate politician.

"I think she got up in the morning thinking about politics, and I bet she went to bed thinking about it as well," Tomec said. "I don't know if she has an off button."

The budding politician's charisma and disarming smile were renowned.

Mike McDonald, a longtime B.C. Liberal who directed the party's 2013 campaign, met Clark at Simon Fraser. They spent time as volunteers driving around the province before the 1991 election to recruit candidates for the upstart provincial Liberal party.

"I would … identify who the prospects were and she would go close the deal, because you couldn't say no to Christy," he said. "She has that personality that a lot of people want to say yes to."

Those who were asked for comment on the premier say she is known for having a penchant for rough-and-tumble politics.

"She's no shrinking violet," McDonald said.

Clark was first elected to the legislature in 1996 and became deputy premier and education minister after the Liberals' landslide victory in 2001. She left government in 2005 to spend more time with her family.

After a failed bid to run for Vancouver mayor the following year, she hosted a radio talk show.

Tom Plasteras, who hired Clark for the job, remembers her work ethic.

"Things that tend to exhaust the rest of us energize her," said Plasteras, former program director at CKNW.

In 2011, Clark won the B.C. Liberal leadership as an outsider candidate with the support of only one member of the legislature. She became the first woman in B.C. to lead a party to victory two years later.

When she's not working, Clark is an avid fan of musicals and plays, a passion she shares with her 15-year-old son Hamish, who she says has ambitions to become an actor.

But even when it comes to the theatre, politics isn't far from her thoughts. Her favourite musical is Les Miserables.

"It's a political show," she said, smiling. THE CANADIAN PRESS

CLOSER LOOK | CHRISTY CLARK

Premier Christy Clark is leading the B.C. Liberals into what she hopes will be her second consecutive victory as party leader. Here is a brief sketch of the career politician:

Age: 51

Born: Oct. 29, 1965, in Burnaby.

Education: Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, the University of Edinburgh in Scotland and Universite de la Sorbonne in Paris.

Family: She is separated from ex-husband Mark Marissen, a former senior strategist for the Liberal Party of Canada. Her son, Hamish Marissen-Clark, is 15 years old. They have a female cat named Kevin.

Political career: Clark was first elected in 1996 and was named both deputy premier and education minister in 2001. She became premier in 2011.

Personal career: While on hiatus from politics, Clark hosted a radio talk show on CKNW between 2007 and 2010.

Riding: Westside-Kelowna

Idols: Former B.C. premier W.A.C. Bennett, actress Mary Tyler Moore and Abraham Lincoln

Quote: "I really regret that. Because I still want a cigarette every day. Every single day. It's terrible." — Clark on her decision to take up smoking at the age of 12. She quit 17 years later.

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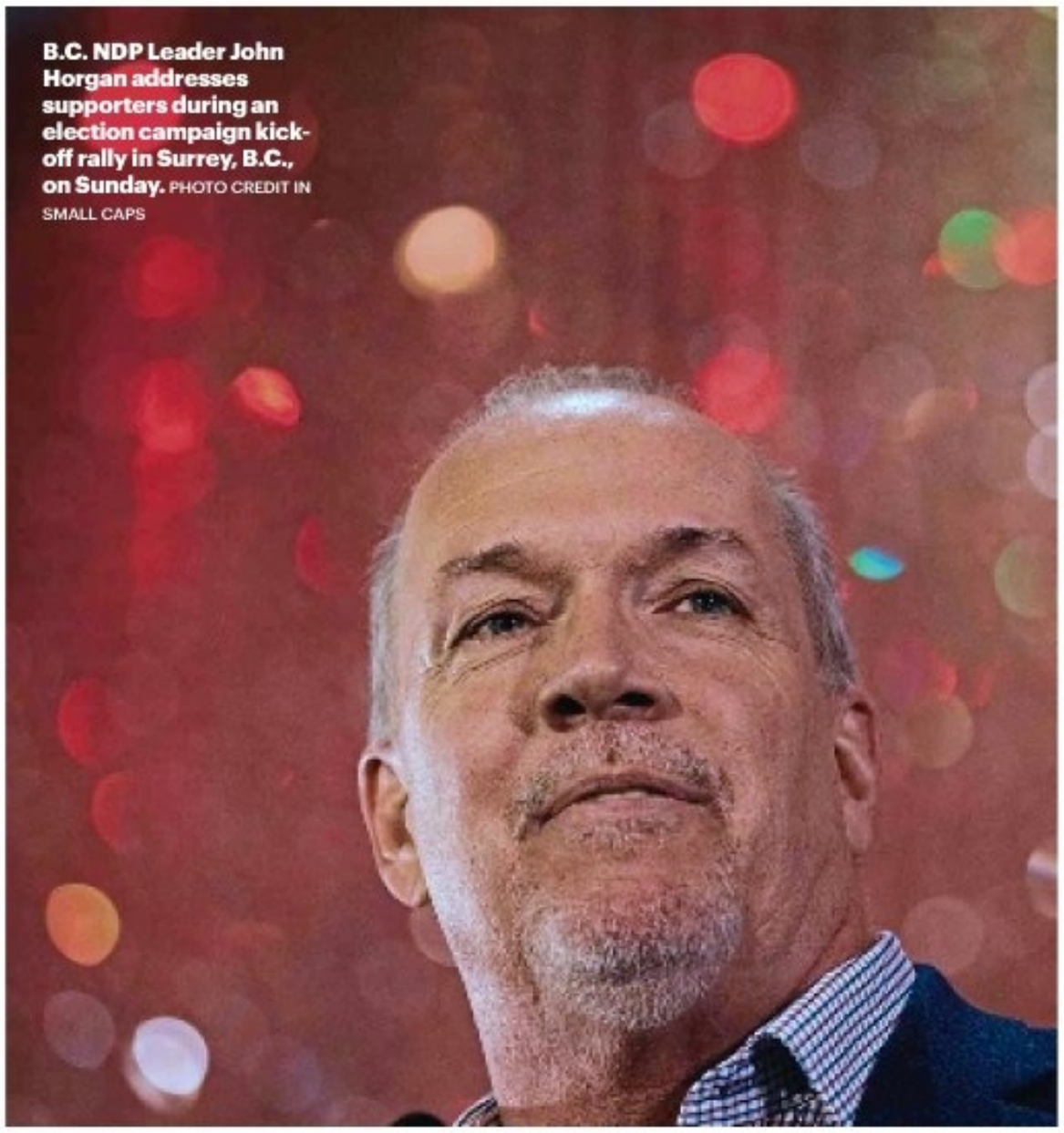

B.C. NDP Leader John Horgan addresses supporters during an election campaign kick-off rally in Surrey, B.C., on Sunday. PHOTO CREDIT IN SMALL CAPS

CLOSER LOOK

John Horgan, leader of British Columbia's New Democratic Party, is a three-term member of the provincial legislature. Here is a brief sketch of the politician.
Age: 57
Born: Victoria
Family: married, Ellie in 1984; two grown sons, Nate and Evan.
Career: A former backroom NDP strategist from southern Vancouver Island. He was acclaimed party leader on May 1, 2014.
Riding: Juan de Fuca
Lives: Langford
Hobby: Refinishes furniture found at flea markets, garage sales or second-hand stores. He prizes his walnut dining table that was once covered in chicken manure and coats of paint.
Quote: "You are stripping away and you see this beauty emerge from two or three or four layers of grubby paint," he said. "I'm colour blind and the grain of the wood is something I can visualize."
THE CANADIAN PRESS

BC Votes 2017

Tough guy build, soft heart

Coach put troublemaking teen John Horgan on track to B.C.'s New Democrat leader.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

As a teenager, John Horgan was as far away from becoming a political leader in British Columbia as you could get.

He was shooting pool at Suzy-Q's, smoking cigarettes and playing the role of troublemaker at the corner of Douglas and Yates streets in downtown Victoria.

"I was a 14-year-old, 15-year-old who's not doing what he's supposed to be doing," Horgan said in a recent interview at the NDP's downtown Vancouver office.

"I was hanging around with the wrong crowd," the NDP leader said. "I wasn't showing up at school. I was getting into trouble. I'm going to leave it at that."

It was only when a high school basketball coach took him by the collar and told him to report to the gym that he turned things around and devoted himself to sports and academics.

"That's really my deep dark secret. I could have gone one way and I ended up where I'm at," Horgan said.

His father died from a brain aneurysm when he was 18 months old and Horgan fought bladder cancer a decade ago. He said those personal struggles opened his heart, especially to society's underdogs.

Horgan, 57, said he has no memories of his dad.

"My brothers, my mom and my sister would always tell me the stories," he said. "My brothers would tell me stories about how he was a basketball fanatic."

Pat Horgan managed Victoria's top senior men's basketball squad in the 1950s and ran the score clock during local lacrosse games. Horgan said his dad would have been proud to know his youngest son played basketball and lacrosse in the same venues.

At 6-2 tall, 250 pounds, playing team sports taught him he could make points without resorting to goon tactics.

"I'm large. I didn't have to do much," he said.

A Victoria news magazine once put his photo on its cover holding a lacrosse stick under the headline "The Enforcer."

"My coach saw this and he came into my office and said, 'Horgan, you were a lover. You were never a fighter.' I tended to stay out of the penalty box. I liked to score goals."

His mother became his role model as she struggled to raise four children alone, while instilling a willingness to help and stand up for others. Money was tight and, at times, food hampers were delivered to the Horgan home.

"My mom taught me if there was someone who needed help you should step in and help them," said Horgan, who grew up wanting to be a social worker. "I was raised to be kind to people."

But his imposing presence and Irish verbal skills can come across as confrontational.

"I'm passionate, for sure," he said. "I always respond viscerally to bullying."

Horgan has two grown sons, Nate and Evan, and he says he never missed their hockey games or musical events.

He met his wife, Ellie, while they were students at Trent University in Peterborough, Ont.

Horgan was acclaimed NDP leader in 2014 after the party's demoralizing 2013 election defeat. The NDP has been in Opposition since 2001.

Former premier Dan Miller, also known for a sharp tongue, said he doesn't see a problem with his former chief of staff showing his emotions.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with having a bit of an edge, frankly," said Miller, who described Horgan as a problem solver and a strong communicator.

"John has the ability to understand issues and concepts and explain them to individuals or the public at large."

Roy Banner said his friend often gets on the bus in his riding and holds impromptu meetings with passengers.

"He's approachable," Banner said. "He's able to put things in peoples minds by the way he tells a story."

In his spare time, Horgan prefers reading science-fiction or watching Star Trek.

"I like to dive into something that doesn't exist," said Horgan, who hitched up a pant leg to show off his Star Trek socks. "I like to be completely detached from the world I live in. That's how I relax."

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Pakistani activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai is presented with an honorary Canadian citizenship by PM Justin Trudeau on Parliament Hill Wednesday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Malala's nudge to Parliament

PARLIAMENT HILL

Teen activist an honourary Canadian, asks country to lead

The irrepressible Malala Yousafzai, the teenage Nobel Peace Prize winner who survived a Taliban bullet in 2012, delivered an enduring message of hope, perseverance and inspiration Wednesday — and did it as an honorary Canadian citizen.

Yousafzai used her newfound membership in the Canadian family and towering presence on Parliament Hill to apply a little friendly pressure, calling on the country to go beyond honorifics and take a global lead in ensuring more girls can go to school.

"I know where I stand," Yousafzai said during a moving speech to a joint session of Parliament that was punctuated frequently by thunderous standing ovations. "If you stand with me, I ask you to seize every opportunity for girls' education over the next year."

The 19-year-old called on Canada to make girls' education the centrepiece of its work as host of the G7 next year something that would bring full circle the process of how the Pakistani activist became Canada's sixth honorary citizen.

The accolade was originally to be conferred by former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper, whose inner circle thought honouring Yousafzai would be a logical offshoot of their government's focus on women and girls' health when Canada last led the G7.

She was to have received the honour on Oct. 22, 2014, but on that day a gunman rampaged through the very building where Yousafzai stood Wednesday.

"The man who attacked Parliament Hill called himself a Muslim, but he did not share my faith," she said.

"I am a Muslim and I believe that when you pick up a gun in the name of Islam and kill innocent people, you are not a Muslim anymore."

The gunman "shared the hatred" of the man who attacked the Quebec City mosque in January, who killed civilians and a police officer in London three weeks ago, who killed 132 school children at Pakistan's Army Public School in Peshawar, she said.

"The same hatred as the man who shot me."

Malala sang Canada's praises throughout her speech.

"'Welcome to Canada' is more than a headline or a hashtag," she said. "It is the spirit of humanity that every single one of us would yearn for, if our family was in crisis. I pray that you continue to open your homes and your hearts to the world's most defenceless children and families — and I hope your neighbours will follow your example."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Researcher drowns

A renowned HIV/AIDS researcher from Montreal has died in Florida.

Police in Bal Harbour, Fla., say Mark Wainberg drowned Tuesday while swimming with his son. Acting Capt. Miguel De La Rosa says Wainberg's son was able to pull his father back to shore.

He says Wainberg, who was in his early 70s, was pronounced dead in hospital. De La Rosa says there were red flags posted at the beach.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TERROR

Troops kill Abu Sayyaf militant in Philippines

Philippine troops battling militants in a central province have killed a key Abu Sayyaf commander who had been blamed for the beheadings of two Canadian hostages in 2016.

The Philippines military chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Ano told The Associated Press that troops have recovered and identified the remains of Moammar Askali, who used the nom de guerre Abu Rami, in the scene of the battle in a far-flung coastal village on Bohol island.

Five other Abu Sayyaf gunmen were killed in the fighting on Tuesday, along with four soldiers and policemen.

Askali was blamed for the kidnappings of John Ridsdel and Robert Hall in September 2015. The Canadians had been taken from a marina by Abu Sayyaf gunmen along with a Norwegian man, Kjartan Sekkingstad, and Hall's Filipino girlfriend, Marites Flor.

The militant group demanded a ransom, which Canada refused to pay, and both Canadian men were beheaded. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Funding provided by the Government of Canada through the Canada-British Columbia Job Fund.

FOCUS ON FAMINE | Update: Somalia

Mahmood Qasim, left, is in northern Somalia to oversee projects to distribute food and water supplies to people facing famine. CONTRIBUTED

'Kids are fighting over empty bottles'

APPEAL

Canadian team staying longer to try to avert growing crisis

Gilbert Ngabo
Metro | Toronto

The magnitude of drought caught Mahmood Qasim and his team off guard when they landed in Somaliland (northern Somalia) last Friday.

The heat is unbearably extreme, with daytime temperature hovering around 40 C. Thousands of displaced families leave their dead livestock behind and travel hundreds of kilometres on foot to reach makeshift camps, where it's easier for aid organizations to distribute food and water. Desperate children line up on roads hoping for passersby to throw anything at them to eat.

"Kids are fighting over empty bottles, trying to squeeze out the last drop of water," said Qasim from Mississauga, speaking to Metro this week from Ainabo, Somaliland.

As a member of the Islamic Relief Canada, Qasim travelled with some members of the Somali Canadian Task Force on Famine Prevention in Somalia — one of the four countries facing a famine outbreak according to the United Nations.

Metro has chronicled the ongoing food insecurity in Somalia, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen. Efforts by immigrants from affected countries have sprung up across the country to raise funds for people in need of immediate assistance. The Islamic Relief Canada has committed to raising $1.2 million for Somalia. They've collected over $300,000 so far.

The situation is so dire Qasim and his team had to delay their return time in an effort to reach more affected regions. About 600 households in Ainabo received food and water supplies on Monday. Another 400 displaced families in Waridaad got supplies Wednesday, while plans are underway to visit Bohotle camps near Ethiopia. Even then, Qasim knows their efforts aren't enough to avert the crisis he's witnessing.

"It's not even close," he said. "This is going to become a major crisis if nothing is done to stop it."

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Somali-Canadians across the country and many other NGOs are leading efforts to assist those affected by famine in Somalia:

- **Somali Canadian Task Force on Famine Prevention in Somalia:** Formed last month as a response to the famine, the group has raised over $300,000 through Islamic Relief Canada. Info at islamicreliefcanada.org
- **Horn of Africa Development Assistance:** The Ottawa-based non-profit runs development projects in Somalia aimed at fighting poverty and building capacity. To get involved or donate, visit hada.ca

Global digest

United promises 'this will never happen again'
The chief executive of United Airlines said the carrier will no longer ask police to remove passengers from full flights after the uproar over a man who was dragged off a plane by airport officers in Chicago.

In a televised nterview Wednesday, Oscar Munoz said he felt "ashamed" watching video of David Dao being forced off the jet.

"That is not who our family at United is," he said. "This will never happen again on a United flight. That's my promise."

In the future, law enforcement will not be involved in removing a "booked, paid, seated passenger." Munoz said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sean Spicer apologies for Hitler comment — again
White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Wednesday that his attempt to compare the Holocaust and Syrian President Bashar Assad's use of chemical weapons was "inexcusable and reprehensible" and was made all the worse by this being a holy week for Jews. He said the comment, made Tuesday at the White House briefing, was personally and professionally disappointing, and he asked for "folks' forgiveness."

"To make a gaffe and a mistake like this is inexcusable and reprehensible," Spicer said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S.-Russia ties may be at 'all-time low': Trump
Laying bare deep and dangerous divisions on Syria and other issues, President Donald Trump declared Wednesday that U.S. relations with Russia "may be at an all-time low." His top diplomat offered a similarly grim assessment after meeting with Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

"Right now we're not getting along with Russia at all," Trump said flatly during a White House news conference. It was stark evidence that the president is moving ever further from his campaign promises to establish better ties with Moscow.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fearless Girl challenged

STREET ART

Bull sculptor says statue violates artistic copyright

Andrew Fifield
Metro | Toronto

Fearless Girl appeared on Wall Street on March 7 to mark International Women's Day. GETTY IMAGES

Wall Street's Fearless Girl has spent weeks in a staring match with Charging Bull, and the bull blinked first.

The statue of the steadfast girl, which appeared on March 7 to mark International Women's Day, was created by artist Kristen Visbal and was commissioned by a New York advertising firm and a Boston investment bank as a pointed message to corporate America about the lack of women in their boardrooms.

However, where others see an inspiring note for women and girls, the sculptor behind the bull, Arturo Di Modica, sees "an advertising trick" that is violating his legal rights.

"I put it there for art," the Italian-born artist told MarketWatch in March. "My bull is a symbol for America. My bull is a symbol for prosperity and strength," adding that Fearless Girl infringes on his artistic copyright by offsetting it with a distinctively different element.

This week, in a bid to once again make his bull the master of its domain, Di Modica has turned to another symbol for America: threats of litigation.

The Italian-born artist has enlisted a lawyer to challenge city officials that granted the permit. Attorney Norman Siegel says he will be seeking the decision's paper trail to ensure proper procedures were followed.

150 WAYS of looking at Canada

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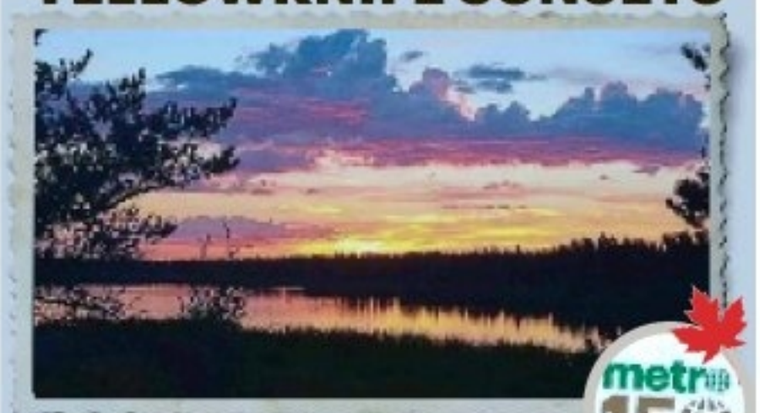

YELLOWKNIFE IS KNOWN FOR THE EVER BEAUTIFUL NORTHERN LIGHTS. HOWEVER, I THINK THAT THE SUNSETS IN THIS NORTHERN CITY ARE EQUALLY MESMERIZING. JUST CLIMB ON A ROCK BY THE LAKE AND ENJOY THE STUNNING VIEW DAY AFTER DAY. IT WAS OUR ABSOLUTE FAVOURITE THING TO DO WHILE LIVING UP THERE. **VISHAL**

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Six days of advance voting

Advance voting is available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (local time) on April 29 and 30, and May 3, 4, 5 and 6. All voters can vote at advance voting and all advance voting places are wheelchair accessible.

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General Voting Day is May 9. Voting is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Pacific time).

What if I'll be away?

Vote at your district electoral office from now until 4 p.m. (Pacific time) on May 9, or ask for a vote by mail package from Elections BC.

Becoming a candidate

You can get a candidate nomination kit from your district electoral office or online at **elections.bc.ca**.

Completed nomination kits must be delivered to your district electoral officer by 1 p.m. (Pacific time) on Tuesday, April 18, 2017.

Questions?

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New episode April 14 featuring Daniel Dale and Celeste Yim
Safe Space

VINAY MENON ON BILL O'REILLY'S VACATION

O'Reilly told viewers he'd be back in two weeks. But there is an internal debate at Fox about his future.

Bill O'Reilly is taking a vacation that should be permanent.

"This time of year, I grab some vacation because it's spring and Easter time," O'Reilly told viewers on Tuesday night, sporting the fake smile of a creep under siege who secretly fears the jig is up. "Last fall, I booked a trip that should be terrific."

He did not reveal his itinerary, possibly to avoid tipping off women he may decide to sexually harass on his travels: "Yes, front desk? I need some loofah and your hottest cleaning lady sent to my room, pronto. Is there a masseuse on staff, preferably of Balinese descent? I'd like to show her something. Do you know if there are any Scandinavian flight attendants staying here? Oh. I see. Well, what are you wearing right now? Care to visit my pro-spin zone?"

Is this grossly unfair? No. Actually, it's not. If the above references are unclear, read the 23-page statement of claim in a sexual harassment lawsuit that a former producer from The O'Reilly Factor filed in 2004. It's a mind-blowing document that ended up on The Smoking Gun; just don't read it if you're eating a falafel, or ever again plan to eat a falafel.

At the time, Fox News treated the lawsuit as a regrettable aberration, possibly even one big misunderstanding. It was a one-off, execs whispered to reporters off the record — a one-off that warranted no official reprimand.

O'Reilly, then as now, was the network's biggest star. And even if he's widely perceived as a huffing and puffing gasbag who profits from random skirmishes in the culture wars he starts with his arsenal of intellectually dishonest grenades, he was and is ratings gold. Fox News without Bill O'Reilly, went the thinking inside Fox News, would be like McDonald's without the Big Mac.

Yes, unless the Big Mac was suddenly linked to a massive outbreak of E. coli.

After a number of scandals at the network recently — including the dismissal of former chairman Roger Ailes last summer over, yes, charges he sexually harassed a number of female employees — can Fox afford to keep its biggest money-maker?

That's the real question.

As O'Reilly says, "The truth hurts." And the truth is that after scolding the world for more than two decades, after harnessing populist rage and making a killing as an alleged champion of decency and family values, O'Reilly's alleged indecency is now the story.

Unlike the lawsuit in 2004, the story this time won't fade into the ether. As this month's exodus of advertisers from The O'Reilly Factor suggests, companies are now far more likely to take a zero-tolerance stand against sexual harassment.

Sponsors don't want to be associated with predatory allegations.

The top-line damage to reputation overshadows the bottom line.

O'Reilly's downward spiral started earlier this month with an investigation by the New York Times. The newspaper discovered a total of $13 million has been paid to five women over the years "in exchange for agreeing to not pursue litigation or speak about their accusations against (O'Reilly)."

Fox News host Bill O'Reilly should make his upcoming vacation permanent, writes Vinay Menon. AP PHOTO

Why the eight digits of hush money? It seems the complaints against the talking head cover a "wide range of behaviour, including verbal abuse, lewd comments, unwanted advances and phone calls in which it sounded as if Mr. O'Reilly was masturbating."

And you thought telemarketers were treacherous.

According to the story, there was a "pattern" here: "Mr. O'Reilly would create a bond with some women by offering advice and promising to help them professionally. He then would pursue sexual relationships with them, causing some to fear that if they rebuffed him, their careers would stall."

That pattern, incidentally, was crystal clear in the 2004 lawsuit, which according to the Times, was settled out of court for roughly $9 million. But nothing was done.

So now O'Reilly is "on vacation." If he's travelling on United Airlines and the flight is overbooked, maybe he'll be dragged off the plane, battered and bruised. If that happened, he'd at least get a taste of how it feels to be abused by those in authority, to have his personal safety compromised and his rights violated just because someone thought they could get away with a reprehensible act.

He might even get new insights into what he's accused of doing.

O'Reilly told viewers he'd be back in two weeks. But as New York magazine reported on Tuesday night, there is an internal debate at Fox about his future.

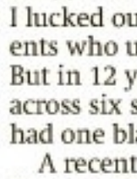
There are those who believe he should never return from vacation.

Ironically, that's exactly what O'Reilly would favour if similar charges were levelled against a rapper, Hollywood liberal, feminist, leftist, atheist, tree-hugger, moonbat or any of the other enemy groups he's railed against as the stern granddaddy of conservative censure. He'd be screaming for blood right now.

This might be something he thinks about if his vacation never ends.

Vinay Menon is a Toronto Star entertainment columnist.

Students need role models to achieve true equity in school



Vicky Mochama
Metro

School can be pretty racist.

At one dance at my high school, a couple students showed up drunk. The school naturally involved the parents. In the end, the white kids who'd broken the rules were given light punishments, but the black boy was given a full week's suspension.

This was standard at my school. The white kids were given the benefit of the doubt while the full weight of the institution was brought to bear on the black students. At times, it was punitive. But at others, it looked like the bigotry of low expectations, such as guidance counsellors who steered black students away from university-oriented courses and toward college or technical ones.

There is another way school can be pretty racist. I lucked out on having parents who used to be teachers. But in 12 years of education across six schools, I only ever had one black teacher.

A recent working paper from the IZA – the Institute of Labor Economics found that having just one black teacher during elementary school decreases the probability of low-income black boys dropping out by nearly 40 per cent. Moreover, black students who'd had one black teacher were more likely to say they expected to go to college.

While the research is American, the conclusion is useful for schools here: Diversity within the teaching ranks isn't just a statistical measure about "representation." It is actually essential for students to see role models in order to imagine their own success.

Equity builds on diversity by letting students of all races see teachers of colour in a range of positions within education.

Another American study showed that students of all races are more likely to have positive perceptions of teachers of colour, and that this perception was linked to performance in standardized tests.

Canada's demographic changes are going to be felt in our schools. Around cities especially, the commitment of school boards to equity is going to affect how well non-white students do.

For a long time now, parents in York Region District School Board, just north of Toronto, have complained that their kids were facing a system of racism and discrimination. A report this week vindicates the parents. The trustee who referred to a parent with a racial slur isn't an anomaly but, rather, proof of a systemic problem and a lack of skilled leadership.

The report notes that under the current director of education, the board had made equity "a foundational practice." Parents, however, were unclear what that meant. Furthermore, presentations on equity showed no specific plans or targets.

Equity – and its partners, diversity and inclusion – have become vague terms. But in school, especially, it is essential that they are clearly understood and made a priority.

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MOVIES MUSIC TELEVISION DIGITAL

Five years after being offered the role as Emily Dickenson, actress Cynthia Nixon thought the film would never come together, writes Richard Crouse. CONTRIBUTED

Love and longing before there was Sex and the City

INTERVIEW

Poet Emily Dickenson portrayed by Cynthia Nixon

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

"Success is counted sweetest, By those who ne'er succeed," wrote Emily Dickenson in one of the seven poems she published during her lifetime.

Those lines must have played on the minds of the filmmakers behind A Quiet Passion, a biopic of the reclusive nineteenth century poet. Production suffered setback after setback while bringing the story to the screen.

Five years after being offered the role Cynthia Nixon said, "I never thought it would come together. I thought, 'Thank you for thinking of me, it is a good part for me but I don't see how you are going to get this made.'"

The former Sex and the City star often thought about the project but claims she was never impatient at the film's lack of progress.

"I started acting as a 12-year-old and I went to a very tough school and what that taught me was that when I was up for a job that I really wanted and I didn't get, I would think to myself, 'At least I don't have to do double duty. I don't have to do school and work.' Now I have three children and am married. I run a household so when I am not working, I feel it less than other people.

"If you are in something for the long haul you are not constantly taking its temperature."

It took years but Nixon and director Terence Davies succeeded in telling Dickenson's story, bringing to cinematic life not only the facts — she was reclusive and never married — but also the essence of a person with an insatiable need to question societal norms.

"The questions she is asking as a person and as a woman," says Nixon, "they are big questions. How do I deal with all this love I feel? What does it mean to be intimate with another person? Will I lose myself and do I want to lose myself? I think she was so ahead of her time in thinking these things were an option, like whether she would marry or not. For her that was a question. It wasn't like she was dying to get married and didn't. She chose not to. Whether she was going to be a mother or not. These are questions that women today deal with as a matter of course but most nineteenth century women would not have even stopped to consider."

Nixon says Dickenson's ideas and words have been a constant in her life. "We had a record at home of Julie Harris reading some of the poems and the letters. I would listen to them again and again so some of the better-known poems and letters I learned by heart."

Dickenson died 130 years ago but Nixon feels there are timely elements in A Quiet Passion for today's audiences.

"If you think about the mid nineteenth century in America and you think about the issues we were dealing with in terms of women, it is a straight line from there to here. We've obviously come very far but it is exactly the same issues. Are women going to be treated equally?

She saw the jump between the way things are supposed to be and the way things are, and she didn't try to wallpaper over anything."

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Romance is 'like a pair of odd socks'

INTERVIEW

Ethan Hawke says he relishes chance to play gruff character

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

In Maudie, a biopic of Nova Scotia folk artist Maud Lewis, Ethan Hawke plays Everett, the artist's brusque husband. "You walk funny," he says when he first meets her. "You a cripple? You sick?" In other words, he's not exactly a charmer.

"It's always fun and such and such a great experience to get to play a character that audiences love," says Hawke. "It feels really good. But often to tell a really interesting story you have to play people who are badly behaved. I feel that as gruff and as unacceptable as a lot of Everett's behaviour is, it is not uncommon at all of men of that time period. I remember my grandmother always accusing my grandfather of not wanting a wife but a maid. He's somebody that in the course of that relationship learns how to love."

As romance blossoms between them, Maud's art — handmade postcards, paintings — slowly gains fans, including Vice President Richard Nixon who purchased a landscape by mail. As Maud's increasing recognition threatens Everett's simple way of life their union becomes strained.

"I found that story really surprising. The subtle details of their internal power shifts, I thought, were really true to life. All long-term relationships have strange power dynamics and the behaviour within the couple is always shifting about who's in charge and in charge of what, and what that does to their love and how that changes."

The couple is, as Maud says, "like a pair of odd socks."

"I thought it was a beautiful journey to go from someone who was abusive to somebody who knew how to love and care for another person. That's an interesting character to get to play."

The script caught his eye not only because of the chance to play a complicated character but also because of his affinity for Nova Scotia.

"I bought a place in Nova Scotia probably in the late nineties. I've been going up there once or twice a year every since then. I love it up there.

"Through a friend of a friend they thought I might like the script just because I like Nova Scotia so much. They were right. Of course then they tricked me and the shooting ended up being in Newfoundland. I thought I could shoot this movie and live in my house, but I couldn't."

Maudie is a movie about small moments; an exchanged look, a caress. Like its real-life inspirations, the film is unpretentious — occasionally gruff but always honest and truthful.

"Most of us aren't in giant espionage battles or helicopter chases. Most of us don't need a superhero," Hawke says. "For most of us the real events of our lives correspond around love. The losing of it, the gaining of it. How we feel about any given time period of our life has to do with that and I think it is very difficult to make love stories for adults because they're very complicated.

"Arthur Miller has a great quote about how everybody is interested in stories about falling in love and getting married, or stories that start with a break up but end in somebody finding resolution. But what is very difficult to do is show the actual relationship. I love this story for the messiness of the real life in it."

A romance blossoms between Everett, played by Ethan Hawke, and Maud Lewis, played by Sally Hawkins, as her art slowly gains fans in Maudie. The biopic of the Nova Scotia artist opens this weekend. CONTRIBUTED

LOST ART

Maud Lewis painting to be displayed

A recently discovered painting by Maud Lewis went on display Tuesday, as the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia highlights its collection of the famed folk artist's works to coincide with a new feature film on her life.

The work entitled "Portrait of Eddie Barnes and Ed Murphy, Lobster Fishermen, Bay View, N.S.," was recently found by volunteers sorting through donations to the Mennonite Central Committee Thrift Centre in New Hamburg, Ont.

The painting will be on display Tuesday through Sunday along with a small display of photographs from the film and costumes worn by actors Sally Hawkins and Ethan Hawke.

The painting will also be on view from April 21 to May 19 at the Homer Watson House and Gallery in Kitchener.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Dwayne Johnson is 'franchise Viagra'

Take a flagging franchise, add Dwayne Johnson and watch flaccid box office numbers suddenly grow, writes Richard Crouse. CONTRIBUTED

IN FOCUS

Former wrestler is Hollywood's biggest actor

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

A movie star is someone who can carry a movie, a person audiences will line up to see no matter what the film. There's no formula, just equal parts talent, charisma and staying power.

For years Tom Cruise and Will Smith ruled the Hollywood roost, but Cruise's couch jumping tarnished his star (unless he's headlining a movie with the words Mission Impossible in the title) and Smith has hit a box office rough patch.

These days, Hollywood's biggest movie star — both physically and metaphysically — is a former wrestler who made his acting debut playing his own father on an episode of That '70s Show. Since then Dwayne Johnson's paycheques have blossomed along with his popularity and in 2016 he was the world's highest-paid actor, in part due to his reputation as "franchise Viagra."

It's a simple formula. Take a flagging franchise; add Johnson and flaccid box office numbers suddenly grow. Case in point, the Fast and Furious series. Johnson signed on for the fifth instalment, playing Diplomatic Security Service agent Luke Hobbs, helping that movie make north of six-hundred million dollars. His over-the-top presence — who else could remove a cast from his broken arm simply by flexing his oversized biceps? — drove the grosses of the next two F&F movies to the stratosphere. This weekend's The Fate of the Furious is poised to shatter even more records.

His is a varied filmography: a resume containing everything from the highbrow, abstract sci-fi flick Southland Tales, and the bloody b-movie Walking Tall, to the family friendly Tooth Fairy and the pedal-to-the-metal Fast & Furious flicks. But they are bound together by one thing — his innate star power.

Haters, like a recent commenter at Variety.com, who complained that Johnson, "has never done a compelling complex character, only mindless good vs evil roles," miss his populist appeal.

Despite his Greek God physique, he's an everyman, a charismatic crowd-pleaser with a cocked eyebrow.

His appeal continues off screen as well. He's a big deal now but that wasn't always the case and he's positioned himself as an inspirational figure, a muscle bound Tony Robbins. "I started w/ $7 bucks. If I can overcome, so can you," he tweeted when he was crowned the World's Highest-Paid Actor.

"I have enjoyed a good amount of success and I'm very grateful for everything I have," the bulky actor told me a few years ago.

"I'm very grateful for being who I am. I make sure to approach every project and everything I do as if it is going to be my last," Johnson said.

MOVIE RATINGS by Richard Crouse

Their Finest ★★★	HOW RATING WORKS
Maudie ★★★★	★★★★ SEE IT
Gifted ★★★	★★★ WORTHWHILE
A Quiet Passion ★★★★	★★ UP TO YOU
My Entire High School Sinking Into The Sea ★★★★	★ SKIP IT

FAMILY FEUDS

Diesel-Rock drama 'business as usual'

The Fast and the Furious franchise has seen its share of drama outside of the films, but rumoured infighting between the series' biggest stars, Vin Diesel and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, is uncharted territory for the long-running series.

The riff was put into the spotlight last year when Johnson, while shooting The Fate of the Furious, took to Instagram to both express appreciation for his female co-stars and embarrass some of his male counterparts for unprofessional behaviour, calling them "candy asses." It's alleged he was referring to Diesel.

But at the film's world premiere in New York, many attributed the situation between the two stars as nothing more than "business as usual" on a film set.

Michelle Rodriguez, who plays Letty in the series, equated it to a family squabble.

"If you know a family that never fights, then I think ... you just met a Stepford family, and that family is (expletive)," Rodriguez said. "It's not real."

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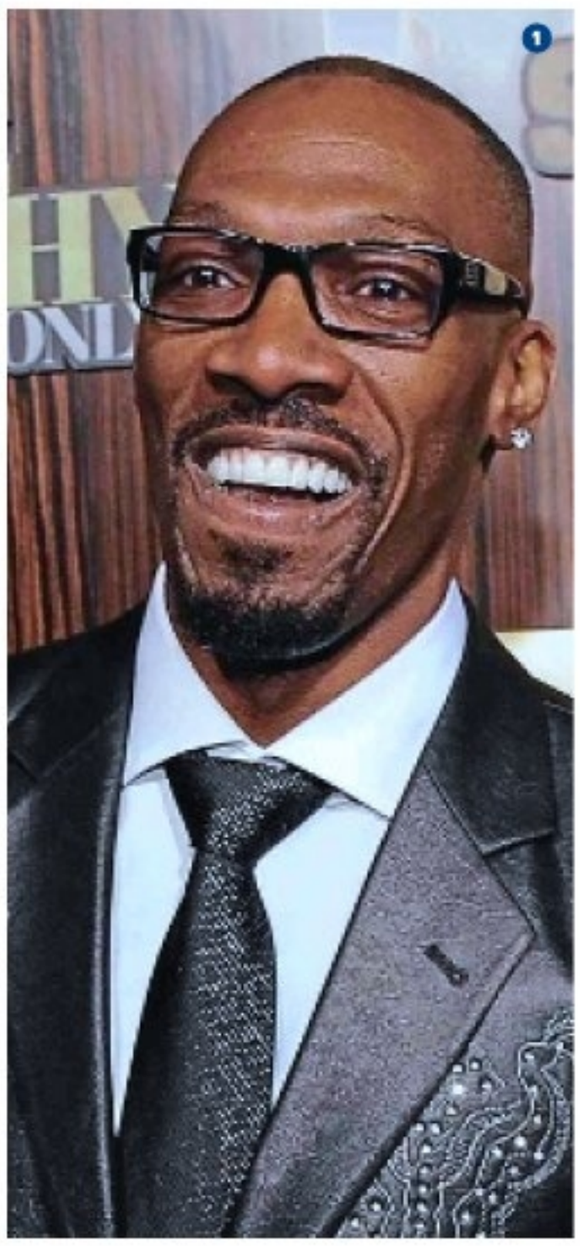

Celeb DIGEST — USA EDITION

1 Old brother of Eddie Murphy dies — Charlie Murphy, older brother of Eddie Murphy and a comedy stand-up and performer in his own right died Wednesday in New York of leukemia. He was 57.

Murphy was perhaps best-known for his appearances on Chappelle's Show, but he also collaborated with writing several of his brother's starring films and appeared in the comedy series "Black Jesus." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

2 Punisher decal appears on police cars, drawing complaints — Earlier this week, a retired art teacher emailed the Solvay, New York Mayor Ron Benedetti about the area's police squad cars, which bear decals referencing Marvel's Punisher character.

After a similar controversy earlier this year in Kentucky, Punisher creator Gerry Conway wrote on Twitter that his "morally compromised anti-hero" was not a good model for police. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

3 Nancy Kerrigan discusses pain of miscarriages — Nancy Kerrigan is opening up about her personal struggles after having six miscarriages in an eight-year span.

The Olympic figure skating star emotionally revealed the miscarriages to her dance partner during Monday's episode of Dancing with the Stars. In an interview on ABC's Good Morning America that aired Wednesday, Kerrigan called the miscarriages "devastating." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sarah Michelle Gellar's tasty muffins

RECIPE

Slay brunch with this dish from former Buffy star

Karon Liu
life@metronews.ca

Nostalgia is one helluva drug, whether we're talking about a Full House reboot, a Fresh Prince reunion or the 20th anniversary of Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

Since Buffy ended, the butt-kicking Sarah Michelle Gellar had a few starring roles (such as the cancelled sitcom The Crazy Ones with the late Robin Williams) and in 2014, she along with the book's co-author Gia Russo founded Foodstirs, an online food company that sells organic baking kits and mixes for children.

Think of it as the food version of the Honest Company, the baby-oriented household goods company co-founded by fellow TV action star Jessica Alba of Dark Angel, which aired in the early '00s.

Actress and writer Sarah Michelle Gellar has released a new kid-oriented cookbook called Stirring up Fun with Food ($36.50, Grand Central Life & Style). EVAN AGOSTINI/INVISION/AP

Gellar and Russo's new offering is Stirring up Fun with Food ($36.50, Grand Central Life & Style), a kid-oriented cookbook focusing on healthy snacks and tyke-sized meals.

Gellar writes in the intro that the book is more "food crafting" than cooking, meaning dishes are presented in a cutesy, kid-appealing manner. Think mac and cheese in cupcake tins, waffles served on and scrambled eggs eaten out of. Most baking recipes recommend boxed mixes (which are conveniently sold on the authors' Foodstirs site), seemingly trying to appeal to parents with limited time and kitchen experience.

Her husband and fellow '90s teenage dream, Freddie Prinze Jr., also released a family-oriented cookbook last year. His recipes seem geared to cooking for the kids while Gellar's book is for cooking with the kids.

"Making fun food with my kids was about more than just getting them to eat. Measuring ingredients, pulling together pots, pans, and bowls; stirring, whisking, dumping, rolling, skewering — and waiting — are skills that helped them develop self-confidence, expand their vocabulary and creative thinking, and sharpen math concepts as well as their fine and gross motor skills (and mine too, for that matter)," she writes.

Clearly I am not the intended audience for this book (being a childless avid home cook who stopped watching Buffy after Season 2).

But I also can see how parents would be drawn to this book as a way to get their kids involved with cooking, or for ideas for throwing a children's party.

MAKE THIS AT HOME

Bite-size pancake muffins

I have to hand it to Gellar and Russo for these cute little breakfast treats, which are essentially pancakes baked in mini muffin tins. They're portable, adaptable and good for people who suck at flipping pancakes. Plus you can make dozens at a time and they even taste good cold. I scaled down the recipe, using two cups of pancake mix rather than the whole 905g box (that would have yielded more than 150 mini pancake muffins). This version yields 36 mini pancake muffins or 12 regular-sized pancake muffins (I prefer the mini size as there's a greater crispy-crust-to-fluffy-pancake ratio). I omitted the blueberries the recipe called for since it's not blueberry season and I refuse to pay $5 for a half pint. This recipe makes 36 mini pancake muffins or 12 regular-sized pancake muffins.

Ingredients:
- 2 cups (500 mL) dry pancake mix
- Non-stick cooking spray
- 1 banana, thinly sliced crosswise
- 1/3 cup (80 mL) chocolate chips
- Maple syrup, for dipping

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 375 F (190 C).
2. In a medium-sized bowl, prepare pancake batter according to package instructions. Spray a mini muffin tray with non-stick spray. Ladle 1 tbsp (15 mL) of batter into each mold and top with chocolate chips and a banana slice. If using a regular-sized muffin tin, fill each cup two-thirds with batter, about 1/4 cup (60 mL).
3. Bake for 15 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove from oven and rest for 5 minutes before removing muffins from tray and serving with maple syrup for dipping.

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You are invited to join us for a presentation on the importance of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces, hosted by Captain Ivona Đukić. The presentation will include information on exciting career opportunities, personal experiences, and a chance to ask any questions you may have.

Les femmes dans les Forces armées canadiennes

Vous êtes invités à une présentation, donnée par Capitaine Ivona Đukić, concernant l'importance des femmes dans les Forces armées canadiennes. Cette présentation comprendra de l'information sur les opportunités de carrière passionnantes, les expériences personnelles et vous aurez la chance de poser toutes questions que vous pourriez avoir.

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Lilly Singh proves she's a total Bawse

INTERVIEW

YouTube star trades viral for vulnerable in debut book

Sue Carter
For Metro Canada

Lilly Singh is often called an overnight success, but in reality, her fairytale rise to fame is the result of what your grandma might have called old-fashioned elbow grease.

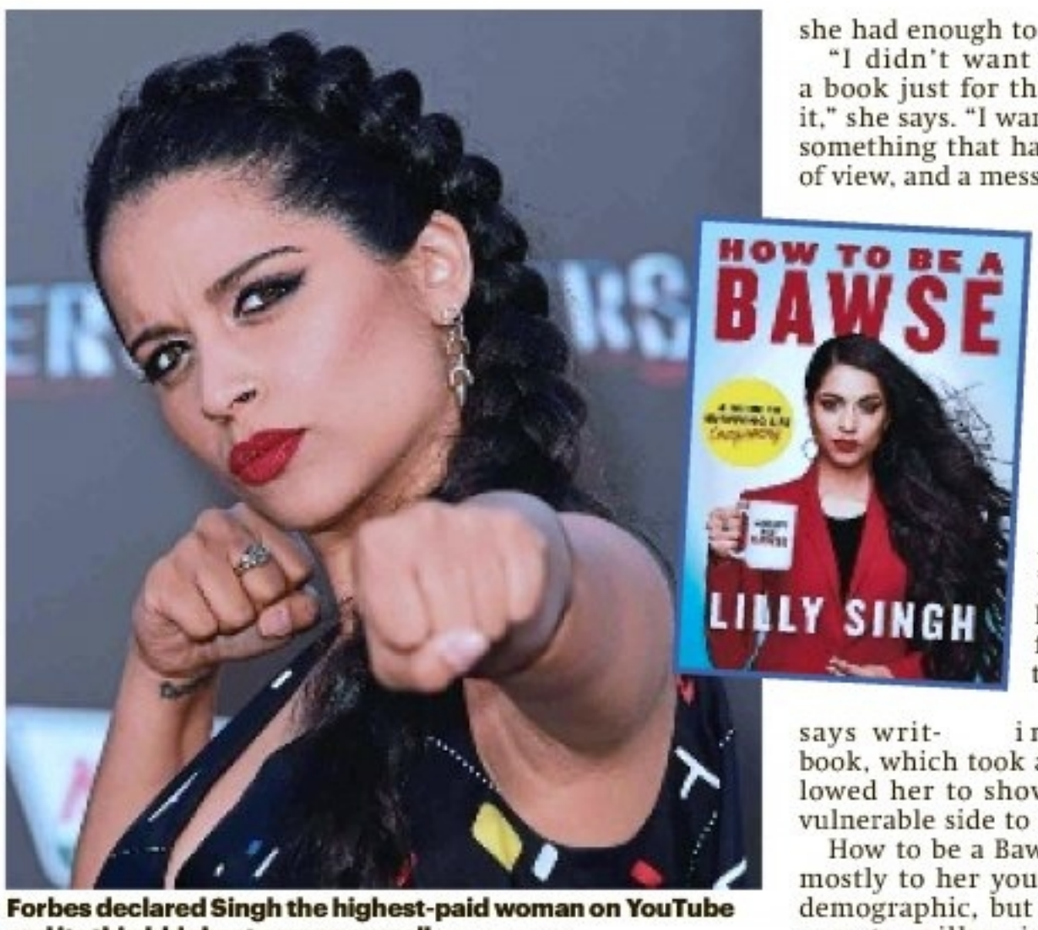
In late March, the YouTube superstar made her third appearance on the Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon. Within a week, after releasing a couple new videos, Singh returned to her old high school, Lester B. Pearson Collegiate Institute in Scarborough, presenting on behalf of First Books Canada, a literacy program that donated 650 copies of her new book, How to Be a Bawse: A Guide to Conquering Life, to an auditorium full of screaming teenagers.

The following day in Toronto, while on her international 34-date book tour, Singh sits in a boardroom at her Canadian publisher, Penguin Random House Canada, for media interviews. There's a handmade pillow sewn by her mother on the chair beside her, a reminder of home wherever she travels.

Singh was 22, living in her parents' Markham home, depressed and caught in a dead-end job when she started producing her own YouTube videos under the alias Superwoman.

Her early content catered mostly to South Asian teens, but as she began to share more observations about life as a young woman, the universality of her mildly feminist messages and straight-up comedy went viral.

In a few years, Singh has amassed over 11 million subscribers and two billion views on the video platform, a sold-out international comedy tour and a role in the Mila Kunis film Bad Moms. Forbes declared her the highest-paid woman on YouTube and its third-highest earner overall, with estimated 2016 earnings of $7.5 million USD.



Forbes declared Singh the highest-paid woman on YouTube and its third-highest earner overall. GETTY IMAGES

Singh had been offered book deals before signing with Random House for How to Be a Bawse, but didn't feel she had enough to say.

"I didn't want to write a book just for the sake of it," she says. "I want it to be something that has a point of view, and a message. A lot of cool things have happened and I feel that I need to extract the lessons from those experiences. Now I feel I can offer something."

Singh says writing the book, which took a year, allowed her to show a more vulnerable side to her fans.

How to be a Bawse caters mostly to her young 13–24 demographic, but her message to millennials is old school, with chapter titles like Don't Overthink and Commit to Your Decisions.

"We are in this environment where we're easily validated by social media," says Singh.

"No one wants to go to the gym, they'd rather take a selfie at the gym. But I want to bring back the art of hard work." (If there's doubt that the BuzzFeed generation is open to motivational advice from books, Bawse became a national bestseller the week after its release.)

Singh tries to live up to her own advice. Yet she is also fearful of reaching a level of super-stardom where her values become blurry.

Every morning she reminds herself: "This is great but don't forget the person you want to be."

That also meant learning how to publicly acknowledge her successes. Singh used to be embarrassed about the Forbes article, fearful of coming across as boastful. But now, in true bawse style, she says, "I own it and say I am super proud."

Sue Carter is the editor at Quill & Quire magazine.

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FW-11- METRO VANCOUVER

Nevermind peak TV, we are now at peak Atwood

INTERVIEW

Acclaimed author talks books, shows and cameos

Margaret Atwood is notoriously late for interviews. She's also renowned for not necessarily answering the questions you've posed, but for giving answers to her own unasked queries instead, in turn quizzing the interviewer.

At 77 years old and with more awards and honorary doctorates than are perhaps possible to count, the Canadian author is easily forgiven. If anything, these quirks add to her mischievous charm and wise aura, and leave you feeling as though you've just had an important conversation about the world rather than having simply discussed the latest in "speculative fiction."

That's the wide-reaching, self-definition Atwood attaches to her futuristic, dystopian novels like The Handmaid's Tale and the MaddAddam series, tomes that are proving to be more relevant today than when she first wrote them. And with a number of her works getting the TV treatment — Bravo premieres the Alexis Bledel and Elisabeth Moss-led The Handmaid's Tale on April 30 just as Kids' CBC unrolls a 26-part children's series on April 29 based on the author's Wandering Wenda and Widow Wallop's Wunderground Washery — these stories are about to be available to audiences in more ways than ever before.

Add another CBC adaptation in the upcoming Sarah Gadon-starring Alias Grace and MGM's development of the dystopian offering The Heart Goes Last, and the prolific — and maybe prophetic — author seems to be everywhere these days.

That includes cameos, executive producer titles and even working on a potential sequel to The Handmaid's Tale (although the writer is cagey about that last point, neither confirming nor denying the rumours that surfaced after this month's release of a special audio version of the book that hinted at a followup tale).

"Executive producer is a very stretchy term," she says, going back to her various titles. "What it meant in the case of Wandering Wenda is going through several iterations of ideas and being part of those discussions. But it didn't mean that I wrote the series because I didn't. It also seems to have meant that I have an introductory cameo at the beginning."

The author says that so far she's impressed with what she's seen of executive producer Bruce Miller's take on The Handmaid's Tale, simply calling it "great" and alluding to more departures from the open-ended novel in the already anticipated second season.

She also reveals that her cameos came with their own challenges. She called her Handmaid's Tale appearance "horribly upsetting" and "too much like history" in a guest column for the New York Times (watch for a slightly physical scene between Atwood and Moss's character Offred in the pilot), and reveals less than ideal weather conditions for a top-secret stint in Alias Grace, which does not yet have an air date.

For those keeping track, TV is just the latest extension of Atwood's brand. Between her novels, children's series, the third volume of her first graphic novel, Angel Catbird, planned for summer, not to mention a plethora of speaking engagements, red carpets and media events tied to The Handmaid's Tale release (she'll be at a screening of the first episode at Innis College April 26), Atwood has far from limited herself creatively.

"How is it that I can do all these different things?" she wonders. "Always did. Always have. In high school, on one hand I was writing dismal poetry but on the other hand I was putting on the world's only home economics opera."

Given all that, you can't blame us for wondering where she'll venture next. Wherever it is, just don't call her a prophet.

"I'm not a prophet. Honest, I'm not a prophet. If I were a prophet I would have cleaned up on the stock market years ago."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Margaret Atwood. LIZ BEDDAL/FOR METRO

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Writers don't always follow their own advice

NON-FICTION

Math meets fiction in Ben Blatt's unique new offering

Genna Buck
Metro Canada

Mathematician and journalist Ben Blatt, author of the new book Nabokov's Favourite Word is Mauve, set out to see what big data had to say about some of the biggest names in books.

He digitally analyzed the thousands of texts, from classics to bestsellers, and came up with some surprising findings.

Notorious adverb-hater Ernest Hemingway, for instance, was an average adverb user. Fan-fiction authors use a colossal number of exclamation points. And yes, Russian literary giant Vladimir Nabokov had a curious fondness for the adjective "mauve." Metro spoke with Blatt about the secrets hiding in our favourite reads.

Where did you get the idea for this book?
I had this thought that every book essentially has 100,000 data points, if you consider a word a data point. And I didn't think anyone had really gone through these books to do experiments, who had an interest in writing and also a math background.

What were the big takeaways?
This book is not prescriptive. But I did spend some time going through classic advice from writers. For example, Elmore Leonard said not to use exclamation points.

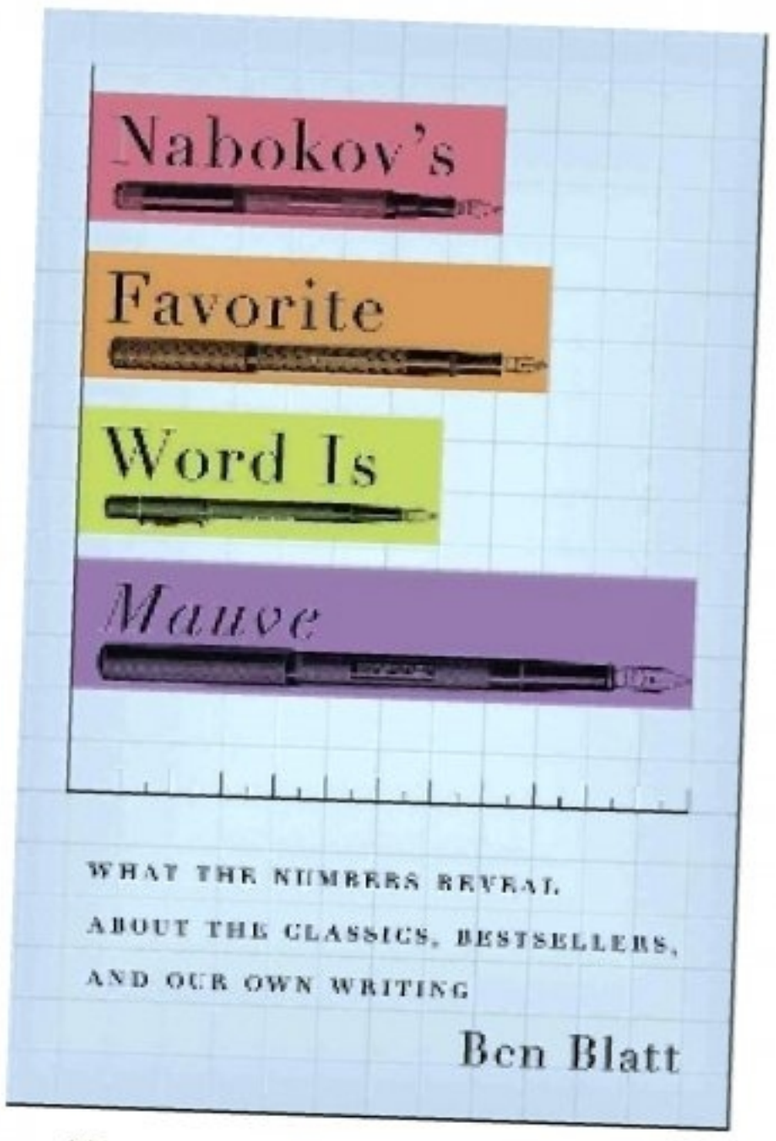
At the time, he was actually an average user of exclamation points. Then, he followed his own advice and started using hardly any.

That was a reoccurring pattern: A lot of times writers tend to give advice on things they might not be following themselves. Looking at the numbers is more informative.

What were some of the most surprising findings?
In the last 50 to 55 years, the sentences have gotten shorter and words have gotten simpler in New York Times bestsellers. It's about two grade levels. The most complex book since 2010 would have been the most simple in the 1960s. It's a very noticeable shift in what is considered writing that would reach the masses.

Any new insights into well-known writers?
A lot of writers say not to open on weather. But Danielle Steele, who is one of the most-read authors writing today, I went through 90 of her books, and close to 50 per cent begin with weather.

I also looked at which authors used 4,000 of the most common clichés. In particular James Patterson, who by most counts is the most-read, most-sold author in America living today, uses the most clichés by a wide margin, even compared to similar authors. But apparently people love his writing, so it's hard to fault him.



Did you come out with a new idea about what makes a great writer?
What makes a great writer is definitely unique style. More concise, more direct, less fluff, that's just the way that writing is drifting today. Those types of books are more likely to be well-read and well-reviewed. Simple words can travel far.

You study a core group of well-regarded and well-loved books. Did you let the computer read them or have you read them?
For the 50 authors I always run stats on, and any author I mention in the actual text of the book, I read one book by each of those authors to make sure that my numbers and my perspective were adding up. It's cool to do that with authors like Kurt Vonnegut. I've read every single book he's ever written, but not really thought about (his) writing style directly.

BY THE NUMBERS

55%

Blatt looked at the ratio of the pronoun 'he' to the pronoun 'she' in classic literature and bestsellers. Books by women had a slightly female-centered approach: generally 55-60 per cent 'she.'

75%

But the average for males is closer to 75 or 80 per cent 'he.'

95%

And some books that are considered great are 95 per cent or more 'he.'

1

"You never come across a book that's taught in school that is the opposite of that," says Blatt, of the prevalence of male pronouns. "It was very shocking. The Hobbit was a really striking one. There literally is just one 'she.'"

Vikram Vij says success came at a cost

MEMOIR

Famed chef admits ego led to the end of his marriage

Vikram Vij never dreamed he would become an acclaimed chef in his adopted homeland, or that he would own a culinary empire by the age of 50.

Nor did the Vancouver-based chef foresee he would be called upon by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan to cook for Canadian Forces overseas, or that he would serve celebrities like Tom Cruise and Martha Stewart.

In his new memoir, Vij: A Chef's One-Way Ticket to Canada with Indian Spices in His Suitcase (Penguin Random House), the chef reflects on his journey from India to Austria, where he went to school, and finally to Canada.

"I'm like this little kitchen knife," he says during a recent interview in Toronto, while holding up a chef's knife.

"I went to Austria and I was beaten and shaped. And I was sharpened in Canada. This is who I am. I'm an alloy of these three countries. Knives are never made of one element. They're made of two, three different elements."

Vij says his goal throughout his career has been to expose Canadians to the cooking culture he left behind in India and show that the cuisine is more than butter chicken and tikka masala.

He uses local food and drink and adds his own twist.

"I'm not saying I'm authentic Indian. I am Vikram Vij and that's the food you're eating...We're all products of where we live," he says.

The Amritsar, India-born chef says he's delighted that Canadians have embraced his style of cooking, and pointed to a fundraiser in Chatham, Ont., last week that attracted 175 people.

"Imagine 25 years ago if somebody had said, 'Let's go and watch an Indian chef cook and eat his food,' probably five people would have showed up, and out of those five, four of them would have been family members because they would have been there just to support you," Vij says.

"So my point is we've come a long way as a nation."

He too has come a long way and credits his ex-wife Meeru Dhalwala for helping him build his brand.

Along with his flagship restaurant Vij's, opened in 1994, he and Dhalwala also co-own Rangoli and have collaborated on three books: Vij's at Home: Relax, Honey; Vij's: Elegant and Inspired Indian Cuisine; and Vij's Indian.

Vij also became a household name in Canada with TV show appearances on Top Chef Canada, Chopped Canada, Recipe to Riches and Dragons' Den, which helped his empire grow to include other restaurants and a food truck, plus partnerships with brands including Air Canada, Chefs Plate and Neal Brothers.

But he admits his success has come at the expense of his marriage.

The couple still do work together and have weekly family dinners with their daughters when they're all in Vancouver.

"I still love Meeru. We hang out all the time. We joke all the time. She is the love of my life. I have hurt her tremendously because of my ego, doing 50 things by the age of 50. And I'm OK to admit it because admitting to your crime is the first step towards recovery. You can always point fingers and say, 'She did it. He did it.'

"I put it in the book: 'If you're going to fail, fail loudly. Say it: I screwed up.'"

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Chef Vikram Vij of Vancouver prepares chicken biryani in the Chefs Plate kitchen in Toronto. THE CANADIAN PRESS/DAN ROBB

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The resort, pronounced "two-lay-lip," has just completed a renovation of epic proportions, transforming all 370 rooms in the hotel to welcome guests.

Located within Quil Ceda Village in Tulalip, Washington, about a two-hour drive from Vancouver, it's more ready than ever to welcome Canadian guests.

The renovation was an extensive 15-month process. Since March of last year, the hotel has welcomed guests to a few new finished rooms at a time. And the response has been overwhelmingly positive. As of April 14, 2017, all newly renovated rooms in the hotel will be opened for guests.

"The rooms are dramatically different than they were before the renovation," says Samuel Askew, general manager of Tulalip Resort Casino. "They're still four-diamond quality, but revitalized and with more Tulalip character."

EACH ROOM WELCOMES VISITORS TO EXPERIENCE WHO THEY (TULALIP TRIBES) ARE AS A PEOPE AND AS A CULTURE.

– Samuel Askew

The multi-million-dollar renovation pays homage to the Tulalip Tribes.

"Each room welcomes visitors to experience who they are as a people and as a culture," Askew explains. "We wanted to take the design a step further and make it more immersive. We asked, if we took the artwork off the walls, how could the room design still clearly represent the Tulalip Tribes and their rich traditions?"

Since the Resort Casino first opened 15 years ago, it has hosted many Canadians who enjoy their quick, cross-border vacations — many of them repeat visitors.

"We see a lot of Canadian guests who come down initially to shop at the Seattle Premium Outlets Mall nearby, and while they're in the area they stop at our venue to enjoy a meal," says Askew. "Once they've experienced Tulalip Resort Casino the first time, many people plan trips specifically to stay in the hotel, have fun gaming with us, enjoy other dining experiences we have to offer, and come down to see our concerts and shows."

CONTRIBUTED

Of course, gaming is a central part of the experience at Tulalip Resort Casino too. The resort offers the best odds, variety and selection of slots, as well as the best cash-back of any Seattle casino. Guests are invited to try their luck at table games, poker and bingo too. Tulalip pays out more than five million dollars (USD) in jackpots every month.

For more information, visit tulalipresortcasino.com.

Don't miss these shows

Tulalip Resort Casino is a hub for entertainment, hosting not just one venue, but three. There's always a show to catch.

The summer concert series at the Tulalip Amphitheatre will host big-name shows including Huey Lewis and the News, Sammy Hagar and The Circle, and The O'Jays and Gladys Knight.

In the Orca Ballroom you'll find some of the best live comedy concerts throughout the year. Upcoming shows include Howie Mandel, Martin Short and more.

Indulge in world-class dining experiences

ISTOCK

The glamorous renovation isn't the only luxury you can enjoy at the Tulalip Resort Casino. It's also a world-class dining experience.

The innovative resort always has something new for its guests, whether it's a new show, or a new restaurant. A multi-day stay is the perfect chance to experience the many new experiences the resort has to offer.

This year, the resort has several new food and beverage concepts in the works. A new quick-service pizzeria is perfect for families and for those who want a great casual meal on-the-go. Called Blazing Paddles Stone Fired Pizza and Spirits, it's set to open in early summer, making custom personal pizzas that are cooked fresh in just three minutes.

Later this year, visitors will be able to find a full dining experience at the resort's new pastaria and chophouse, slated to open right inside the Resort Casino this fall.

"We're really excited about this one," says Samuel Askew, general manager of Tulalip Resort Casino. "It's authentic, Italian, homestyle, fresh pastas, the best, freshest ingredients and highest quality meats."

And that's just the beginning of the options.

When it comes to dining, "we try to cross the spectrum," explains Askew. "We have a sports bar and grill that does big burgers, big hot dogs and nacho platters that can serve six — it's a lot of fun."

Those who are craving Asian flavours can dine at Journeys East, a pan-Asian restaurant located within the resort that was voted one of the best Asian multicultural cuisine restaurants in Washington.

To sample the best of West Coast seafood, you can't go wrong at Blackfish. The award-winning venue offers innovative dishes made with the best, freshest seafood.

For more casual meals, the 24-hour cafe Cedars serves American-style meals and breakfast all day. Or enjoy the wide variety of options at Eagles buffet.

"We try and be as flexible as possible to meet the desires of our guests," says Askew.

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IDEO founder's California home by Ettore Sottsass, of the Memphis Group, is on the market for $19.9M

MEET THE CONDO

Live north of your dreams in North Van

CONTRIBUTED

Project overview

BrookLynn by Wanson Development is a collection of 63 condominiums in North Vancouver. The 6-storey building features one, two and three bedroom homes starting at $299,900. The building is in preconstruction, with sales expected to start in the spring.

Housing amenities

BrookLynn's interiors feature high ceilings, generous outdoor living spaces and an open-concept kitchen. Suites also come equipped with oak-grain laminate floors, quartz countertops and a stainless-steel appliance package.

Location and transit

Living in North Vancouver offers residents the option of driving across the Ironworkers or Lions Gate bridge to reach Vancouver and the downtown core. Alternatively, several bus routes can get residents around, as well as the seabus which runs from Lonsdale Quay to Waterfront Station frequently throughout the day.

In the neighbourhood

Situated in Lynn Creek town centre, residents can select from a range of anmenities in their leisure time. This includes several public parks, boutique cafés and Park & Tilford for shopping. North Shore residents also have quick access to Deep Cove, Lonsdale Quay and beautiful mountains such as Grouse, Seymour and Cypress.

NEED TO KNOW

What: BrookLynn
Developer: Wanson Development
Architect: Francl Architecture
Interiors: Megan Bennett Design
Landscape architect: Durante Kreuk
Location: 467 Mountain Hwy.
Building: Six-storey residential
Models: One, two and three bedrooms
Sizes: Starting from 564 square feet
Pricing: Starting from $299,900
Status: Presale
Occupancy: TBD
Sales centre: 1520 Barrow St., unit 102, North Vancouver
Phone: (604) 770-1663
Website: brooklynnliving.com

INTERIORS

Cramped living: Little kitchens can produce big results

While a spacious, well-appointed kitchen may be the dream of many home cooks, it's possible to create culinary magic in even the smallest spaces, says food expert Vijaya Selvaraju.

Selvaraju, who appears on The Marilyn Denis Show, has her own YouTube cooking channel and is a Tastemaker on the video network Tastemade, says the key to cooking in tight confines is "to whittle it down to the basics."

Small spaces require countertop appliances that multitask, such as a blender or food processor, says Selvaraju. Forced to choose between the two, she'd go for the blender, as it can handle "almost everything — pancake batter, hummus, blended soups and smoothies."

If you do go for a food processor, Selvaraju recommends getting to know the attachments. "A lot of people don't use them, but they can do a lot." She suggests keeping them in a zipped plastic bag in an accessible drawer or cupboard, so they're not forgotten.

Invest in versatile appliances like this blender from Vitamix's Ascent Series and Panasonic CIO. HANDOUT

Selvaraju isn't bullish on gadgets, but she says she uses her Microplane grater almost daily. "Once you start using it, you can't really switch it out for any other grater. I use it for ginger, chocolate, parmesan, garlic — it's so much easier than ... mincing."

She also finds room for a waffle maker. "I love waffles," she says with a laugh. "But I use (the waffle maker) as a panini press, for omelets and toasted sandwiches and in a pinch to grill meat."

To most effectively use freezer space, Selvaraju recommends putting leftovers in plastic bags, with the contents flattened out, so they can be stacked in the freezer. "They'll also defrost faster, so you can get them to the table more quickly," she adds.

Compact appliances can certainly play a role in space-starved kitchens. Panasonic's small-footprint Countertop Induction Oven, for example, which uses induction and infrared heating (up to 230 C with almost no preheat time) can be tucked under a shelf or cupboard.

For small kitchens, designer Jamie Alexander likes Liebherr's Superiore, a 24-inch gas range he says "is a life changer."

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DECOR

Outside trends: Contrast and unexpected fabrics are in

For decades, "outdoor decorating" meant arranging a few nice chairs and a table near a barbecue, then adding an umbrella. But as patios and decks have morphed into "outdoor living rooms," the bar has risen for outdoor style and comfort.

HGTV Design Star judge Vern Yip says he knew we'd reached a new level of outdoor decorating this year when he discovered a fully upholstered, tufted, Chesterfield-style sofa designed for outdoor use. It's not a less comfortable, backyard version of a classic piece of furniture; it's a classic piece of furniture that happens to be weather-proof.

Technology has come so far, Yip says, that we can now have anything outdoors that we like indoors.

As warm weather returns, we've asked Yip and two other experts — interior designer Betsy Burnham of Burnham Design in Los Angeles, and Sarah Fishburne, director of trend and design for The Home Depot — for the furnishings, colour palettes and accessories they are using to make outdoor spaces even more luxurious and inviting.

A patio area in Los Angeles designed by Burnham of Burnham Design. Rather than a set of matching outdoor furnishings, designers are encouraging clients to mix and match a variety of styles and brands. CONTRIBUTED

Mix and match

It's been decades since people shopped for a "suite of furniture" for a bedroom or living room. But until recently, Burnham says, that's been a common approach to outdoor space. That's slowly changing, she says, as people want a more interesting look that doesn't seem lifted directly from a single catalogue page.

Designers are encouraging clients to mix and match. Fishburne says retailers have noticed this trend.

At Home Depot, her design team selects a few shades and makes sure they are consistent throughout the furniture offered that season. So "chili red," for example, will be the same shade if you buy a rug from one brand and pillows from another.

And rather than having to buy a group of four or six identical dining chairs, Fishburne says many chairs are now available in sets of two that can be paired with a contrasting style. There are also more outdoor styles available than ever.

Aluminum-frame furniture is back. "It's the sort of stuff your grandparents used to have, but the 2.0 version," Yip says. "The proportions are what we like today, deeper and bigger and more comfortable."

If you're worried about how to mix and match successfully, try one of these approaches: You can mix furniture frames, perhaps using a few teak pieces alongside metal or woven resin pieces, and then keep all the cushions or pillows the same. Or you can use all metal or all resin frames from different brands and mix up the pillows and cushions. Either way, you have consistency and a unique look that isn't exactly the same as your neighbour's.

Don't settle

"If you had put an outdoor sofa and in indoor sofa side by side in front of a consumer a year ago or two years ago," Yip says, no one would have had trouble picking out which was which. Today, he says, "you really can't tell the difference."

So take time to shop for what you love, rather than settling for typical outdoor furniture you see everywhere. There are outdoor fabrics that feel as soft as what you'd expect indoors and cushions that are just as soft and deep. Yip says the newest outdoor cushions offer two layers of foam and then a top layer made of a down alternative.

Seek "that super-plush feeling with your outdoor furniture that you're used to feeling with your indoor furniture," he says.

Start with your favourite interior design retailers. They're likely to offer outdoor options.

"It's not just at the patio store anymore," says Burnham. For example, she says, Design Within Reach and Restoration Hardware both offer wide selections of outdoor furnishings.

Seek next-level details

Outdoor storage has become even more inventive: You'll find "console tables that have built-in coolers, or daybeds that have built-in coolers," Yip says.

And outdoor accessories have "detailing and embellishments that used to be reserved for indoor stuff," Yip says, including hurricane lanterns with mother-of-pearl detailing and pillows with feathers, beading or embroidery.

"We've figured out how to have all this detailing, all this embellishment," he says, and "how to have it on the outside, so it does endure and it does last."

To define your outdoor space and bring in plants and flowers, Fishburne recommends large "statement planters." They come pre-planted with a mix of plants that look stylish and grow well together.

Most important: Go for a look you love, rather than one that's perfectly co-ordinated.

"All the rules have kind of been broken," says Fishburne. "No one says you have to have a matching cocktail table in front of your chairs."

A rustic daybed on a patio designed by Burnham. CONTRIBUTED

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Renovation reveals 'real' port

ARCHITECTURE

Marseille shows design of public space has big impact

Vieux-Port, the Old Port of Marseille, has been known for centuries as one of the grand Mediterranean ports. It's the largest urban harbour in Europe.

Renowned landscape architect Michel Desvigne describes it as "a legendary place embodying the essence of the city."

But the Vieux-Port of France's second largest city had become increasingly hostile to pedestrians — architectural and visual barriers blocked access to 80 per cent of the area. It was also overrun with cars and yacht clubs, which discouraged tourists and residents from gathering there.

"We needed to bring Marseille into the 21st century," says Marseille's Mayor Jean-Claude Gaudin. "This is where the heart of Marseilles beats." With an eye on celebrating the city's year as European Capital of Culture in 2013, Marseille's city council and the Marseille Provence Métropole government got down to business in 2009.

They hired Desvigne, Tangram Architectes in Marseille and Foster + Partners architecture firm in Britain, to redevelop the area. Grant Brooker, senior executive partner at Foster + Partners, says: "Our work was to preserve and strengthen the existing character, rather than seeking to impose a new identity. The master plan involved reclaiming the quaysides as civic space and reconnecting the port with the city."

First, Brooker says, they needed to declutter the quays by moving boat houses and technical installations to new platforms and clubhouses over the water.

Vehicles were then moved away from three wharves, which are now paved in pale granite, evoking the original limestone cobblestones. According to Desvigne, pedestrians now use more than 60 per cent of the area.

"The traffic volumes have dropped sharply from 2,600 to about 1,000 vehicles per hour at peak times of day," he says of the redesign that emerged as a co-winner of the European Prize for Urban Public Space 2014.

On the eastern edge, a reflective stainless-steel canopy has been built. The "ombrière" measures 46-by-22 metres, is six metres tall and open on all sides.

Brooker says the blade of stainless steel is literally a reflection of its surroundings. "This lightweight steel structure is a minimal intervention, appearing as a simple silver reflective line on the horizon, but brings a new focus, provides basic shelter and creates a venue for performances. The structure has been used as a sunshade, an umbrella, a stage for street theatre, art installations and markets. It seems to have really captured people's imagination."

Architect Matevz Celik, a member of the jury that awarded the Urban Public Space award, has high praise for the transformation of the port. "It's a showcase of how, with very simple actions, you can create a great space. It's now a place of spontaneous and organized events in the city."

Gaudin says the city is happy with the revitalization. "Our city has regained its colours in terms of notoriety, reputation and tourism. Fifteen years ago, we only had a few thousand cruise-ship tourists — today, it's a million."

Residents and tourists have glowing reports. Auriem, a server at La Samaritaine, a nearby café, says the change is beautiful. "It's very clean and visitors are very happy with the new face of the harbour. It feels safer and more cosmopolitan. The atmosphere is also a lot quieter and easier."

Marseilles resident Stefane Mabrini says: "Everybody walks along the harbour now. It feels like a big family. It's like a little town in the town."

Shawn Anderson, from Los Angeles, Calif., visited Marseilles last summer. "The area was super consumer- and pedestrian-friendly. The space was wide open and not your normal tight and confined marina or dock. You could see the fresh catch of the day and then enjoy the fruits of the sea at a local restaurant."

Initial renovations took about a year and were completed in March 2013. Total cost of the project amounted to $64 million, with $51 million spent on this first phase. The next phase involves creating a chain of parks. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Stainless steel canopy reflects the award-winning redesign of the port area. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Avoiding mortgage insurance

CMHC

By building up your down payment, you can avoid those fees

Camilla Cornell

When Cris Lam bought her pre-construction condo in 2014, she was in the enviable position of having a big enough down payment to avoid mortgage default insurance fees.

Why would she want to avoid insurance, you ask? The simple answer: because mortgage default insurance is really intended to protect the lender, not the homeowner. It ensures if you default on your loan, the bank, trust company or other lender will get its money anyway.

Avoiding the insurance — sold by either Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. (CMHC) or Genworth — can save the average homeowner a significant amount of cash over time. Fees rose in March for the third time in the last few years, as part of new regulatory requirements that stipulated CMHC and Genworth had to hold more capital to offset risks in the country's booming real estate market.

For example, if the average price of a house is $730,472 (as it was in Toronto last year), according to the CMHC's premium calculator, if you make the minimum down payment on that home of $48,048 and opt to have the CMHC premiums added to your mortgage, you'll pay more than $27,000 over the life of your mortgage. That's nothing to sniff at.

Cris Lam received financial assistance from her parents to purchase a condo and avoid mortgage insurance costs. PEYMAN SOHEILI

You can avoid those fees and cut down on your interest payments as well by building up your down payment. Here's how:

Visit the bank of mom and dad. Lam's secret weapon was her parents. In 2013, they sold the family home, giving Lam, her sister and her brother $200,000 each to purchase a home of their own.

They even sweetened the pot, boosting Lam's share by $30,000 so she could live on the eighth floor of her condo building — "Chinese lucky number 8." Lam says she and all of her siblings are so grateful for the support. "I know it's not trendy, but why not ask your parents — who may be downsizing in the future — to start thinking of what can happen if you get your pre-inheritance now to purchase your future home?" she suggests.

Note that mortgage lenders may ask for a signed 'gift letter' indicating the money doesn't have to be repaid and specifying the amount, who is offering the cash and their relationship to the recipient.

Take a systematic approach to savings. Even with her parents' contribution, Lam needed a financial planner's help to ensure she was debt-free and had spare cash to cover all the additional costs of home ownership.

She met with Victor Godinho, a financial planner with Pangea Personal Financial Planning, who analyzed her spending and delivered some hard truths. "Do you realize you're blowing $800 a month on food?" he asked her.

"I was caught up in the downtown lifestyle," she says. Lam invested in cooking classes and now designates Sunday as prep day for the week. She also replaced dog-walking fees with a doggy daycare to save money.

> **I know it's not trendy, but why not ask your parents — who may be downsizing in the future — to start thinking of what can happen if you get your pre-inheritance now to purchase your future home**
> Cris Lam

Avoid lifestyle inflation. You get a raise and you immediately decide you can afford to go out for dinner three nights a week.

Personal finance blogger Barry Choi (moneywehave.com) developed a goal-oriented budget with his (then) fiancée Carla Salvosa. Initially, they focused on saving for the big day. "After the wedding, that money that was being saved for the wedding was now being saved for home down payment," says Choi.

Supplement your day job. Take on a side business or a part-time job, as Choi did with his blog. Within the first two years of its launch, he generated an extra $5,000 towards a down payment on a condo and continues to earn a regular income.

Fixed rate vs variable: making the decision

Unless you have a crystal ball to confer with, knowing whether it's financially advantageous to choose a variable-rate mortgage over a fixed-rate mortgage can feel like a daunting task.

In fact, according to Andrew Roper, a mortgage broker with Dominion Lending Edge Financial, because the offerings for each product are quite different, deciding which option to take on or renew should always boil down to three main criteria: your income, lifestyle and overall risk tolerance.

While many Canadians tend to favour stable, fixed mortgages — 51 per cent of homeowners opted for a five-year fixed rate in 2015 — a host of economic experts tout the merits of variable mortgages when it comes to offering the biggest long-term advantage, crediting them with being the cheaper option over time.

When deciding up on what type of mortgage is best for you, experts recommend considering three main criteria: lifestyle, income and overall risk tolerance. ISTOCK

"It used to be that short-term variable-rate mortgages were by and far the most popular choice for homeowners, but recent changes in interest rates have made fixed rates more competitive, which makes deciding between the two that much more difficult," Roper says.

And, while so much of the selection process is about personal preference, "the life situations a person or couple are experiencing or will potentially experience — think marriage, having a child, changing jobs, retiring — necessitate securing a mortgage ideally suited to those needs," he adds. "It's a process where the pros and cons associated with each mortgage type should be weighed very carefully."

How can you determine which option is best for you? With variable-rate mortgages, the appeal is that your payments go up or down based on changes to the prime rate, which is currently set at 2.7 per cent by the Bank of Canada. In recent years, interest rates have been lower than that of fixed-rate mortgages, allowing for more of your monthly payment to be applied to the principle of your home. The drawback: Since mortgage payments fluctuate according to the prime rate, this means that a hefty increase in said rate will increase your interest payments, as well.

Fixed rates are a different story. Unlike variable rates, these are set for the length of the agreed upon term of your mortgage. Meaning if you have a five-year fixed rate at 2.5 per cent, you'll know exactly how much principal and interest you'll pay on each mortgage payment based on the term chosen. The drawback: Should interest rates drop, you're locked in to paying the higher rate until your fixed term is completed.

What are your mortgage goals? If you haven't already, determine what your long- and short-term goals are, how long you plan to live in your house, and if you're trying to pay off your mortgage quickly, of if having a reliable monthly cash flow is more important to you.

"Talking through these points and then speaking to an expert about them is vital because it puts you in a better position to select which mortgage program is ideal for you," says Roper. "Having this kind of discussion will also open the door to a host of related topics, such as flexible payment options, yearly additional payments to your mortgage and the guidelines that surround them."

LIZ BRUCKNER

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Pair up to get into the market

INVESTMENT

With soaring home prices, co-owning a property may be a great idea

Camilla Cornell

Before purchasing a home with friends or family, be sure to have a candid talk and write up an agreement outlining the 'what ifs,' such as one party on the mortgage wants to out or can't meet the monthly expenses. ISTOCK

Helen Birkett longed to get into the housing market. But as a single woman, working three different gigs, she didn't have the kind of steady, nine to five job that lenders want to see.

Then, one night, about 16 years ago, while out for a drink with a few friends, she was bemoaning the fact that she'd been rejected yet again for a mortgage.

"We should go in together on a property," joked one of her friends. They all laughed, but Birkett couldn't stop thinking about what he'd said.

Finally, she called him. "Let's do this," she said. "Let's go out and look at some properties."

They went out shopping for a house that weekend, found a place they liked and bought it. "Everything was split 50-50," she says. "And we had a legal agreement that spelled that out. I even drew up a will to say what should happen to my portion of the property if I died."

That was the first of two properties that Birkett, now 42, has purchased with the same friend. They sold the first when they received an offer from a high-rise condo builder. They bought the latest just three years ago, paying $550,000 for a house they renovated together. They both had two floors, but Birkett turned one of hers into a basement apartment to help with the mortgage. Now they're looking to sell again — her friend may move to the country and she is considering her options.

Initially, many of Birkett's friends questioned her decision to co-own with a friend. But the shared house is now worth $800,000 and with the proceeds from the sale, Birkett should be able to buy a place of her own. "I don't think I would have ever got into the market if I had waited," she says.

Bill Whyte, senior vice president and chief member experience officer for Meridian Credit Union says Birkett isn't the only one struggling to get a foothold on the property ladder in a housing market characterized by soaring home prices, particularly with the federal government's new stress test. "Even though our five-year fixed mortgage is 2.69 per cent right now, you still have to qualify at 4.69 per cent," says Whyte. "That is making the entry into the housing market difficult for people, even if they've been saving for years."

Hence the advent of new mortgage options allowing friends or family to pool their resources and buy together. In many ways, Meridian's new Family + Friends Mortgage, introduced in February, in time for the spring mortgage season, operates like just about any other mortgage.

"There's still a flexible repayment schedule and you can choose any kind of mortgage you want — variable, two-year or five-year fixed," says Whyte.

The big difference? Up to four people can be on a title. They could be siblings, cousins or simply friends that have known each other for a long time. And parents may sign on too, either so that they get their deposit back if the kids sell, or because they want to set up an upstairs/downstairs arrangement with their adult children.

Similarly, Genworth Canada offers a 'family plan program' that allows people to help buy a home for immediate family members who have good credit but lack the income to meet standard gross debt service ratio (GDSR) and/or total debt service ratio (TDSR) requirements. The exception: it can't be used to buy investment properties that won't be owner-occupied.

In spite of the obvious advantages of teaming up to buy a mortgage, it's not a venture to be undertaken lightly, warns Whyte. "You want to make sure you understand all the nuances," he says. That means having a candid talk about who covers what expenses, and what happens if one party to the mortgage wants out, or someone can't cover their share of the mortgage payment. "Divorces happen all the time," he says. "And that's messy enough. When you've got four people on the mortgage it can be a fair bit messier."

Look at financing a mortgage with your RRSP

Erik Heinrich

Robert, 61, has a large investment portfolio in his registered retirement savings plan (RRSP). He's very knowledgeable in real estate and has been investing part of his retirement savings in mortgages for the last 20 years. Through a mortgage agent he learned that a borrower needed $50,000 to pay his property tax arrears, buy a new truck for his business and do some minor repairs to his home.

The borrower was not able to obtain a bank loan because he had not filed his tax returns in several years and had some fairly serious credit issues. But his house was appraised at $275,000, which meant Robert would be lending him less than 20 per cent of its appraised value.

He offered a one year mortgage at 7.5 per cent and charged a $1,000 lender fee, bringing his total return for the term of the loan to a handsome 9.5 per cent. In the meantime the borrower was able to get his taxes up to date and clean up some of his old credit issues. At the end of the year, he repaid Robert the loan plus interest, and was able to secure a replacement mortgage at a much lower rate from a credit union.

Everyone walked away happy thanks to a little known fact.

"An option for RRSP owners is to invest in a mortgage granted at arm's length to a third party," says James Robinson, a mortgage agent and owner of a Dominion Lending Centres franchise.

First you will need to have enough assets in your RRSP to convert into cash, and you will need a self-directed RRSP that gives you more investment freedom and control. Some RRSP accounts only allow for investing in mutual funds and GICs.

Third party mortgages tend to be higher risk loans to individuals who cannot qualify for financing from traditional channels. Higher risk means much higher rates of interest charged by private lenders.

Rates and fees vary depending on circumstances, including the type of property being secured, the income and credit history of the borrower and the loan-to-value ratio (which is the value of the mortgage compared to the property's appraised value).

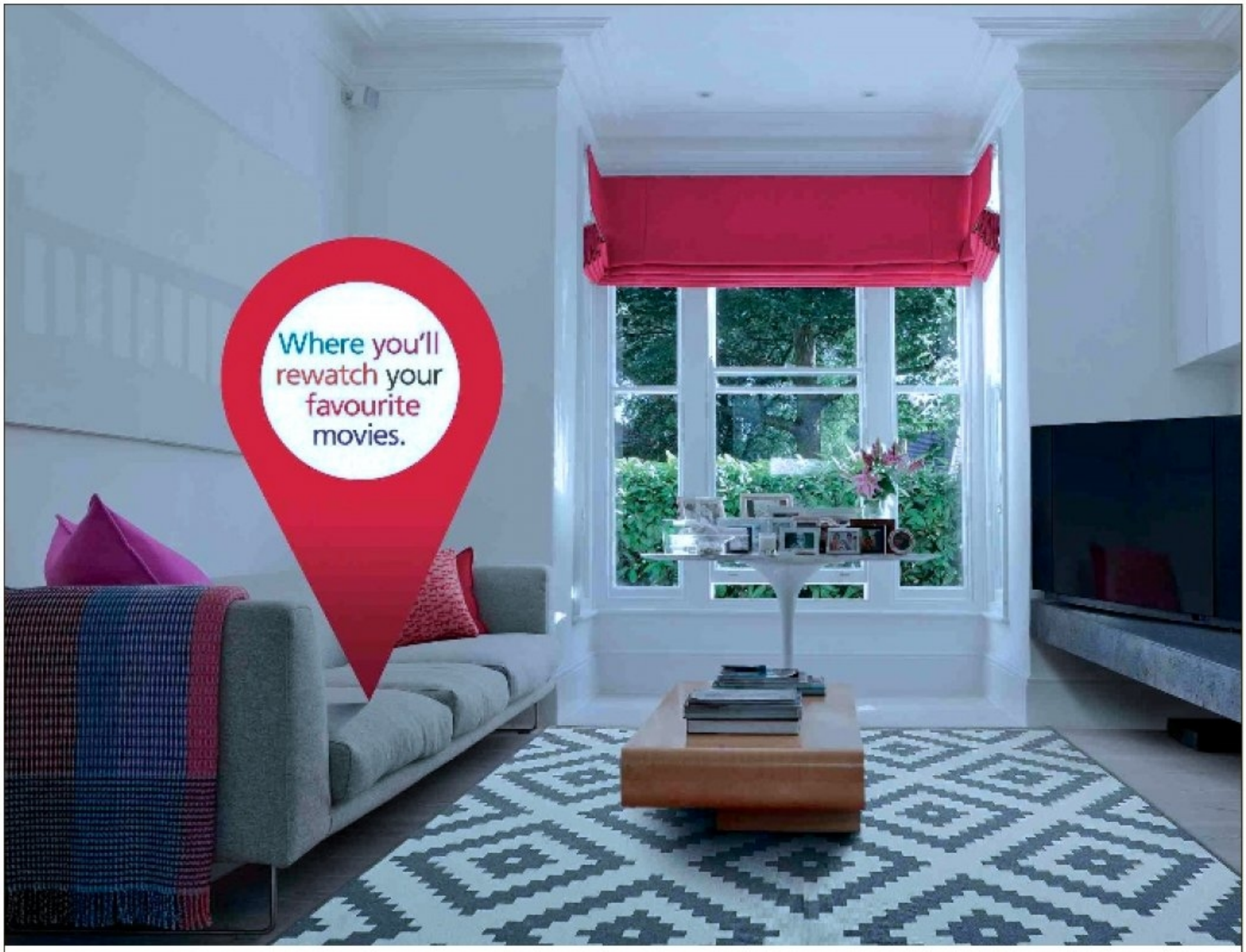
Typically, private first mortgages range from 6 to 10 per cent, second mortgages 8 to 14 per cent. For the investor, the benefit is a much higher rate of return compared to more traditional interest bearing investments such as GICs. But this needs to be weighed against the risk of this type of lending.

"Borrowers who cannot qualify for an institutional mortgage due to income or credit challenges are more likely to default on payments, which could result in the investor losing money," says Robinson. "A good mortgage broker will ensure the facts about the borrower, and property being secured, are fully disclosed to allow the investor to make an informed decision."

The other option is to use your RRSP to finance the purchase of your own home or a rental property. But it really only makes sense if your RRSP is invested in fixed income securities like GICs paying a lower rate of interest than a mortgage of a similar length would charge. Under these circumstances you can eliminate the spread, or profit margin a bank makes in lending you a mortgage, by borrowing from yourself and repaying yourself.

James Robinson, a mortgage agent, has only seen half a dozen clients inquire about using an RRSP to finance a mortgage in his almost 30 year career. JON NICHOLLS

Under Canadian law you are required to purchase default insurance to protect your RRSP if you default on your mortgage. Recent changes in mortgage rules now also require that the home being purchased is worth less than $1 million. "In my 29-year career in the mortgage industry, I have only had half a dozen clients even ask about this program, and only a couple that decided to proceed," says Robinson.



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An ovation for the best of Vancouver

Ovation Awards recognize the best in home construction, renovation and design

The Ovation Awards is a symbol a consumer knows to look for when buying or building a new home, or planning a dream renovation.

From complete condominium renovations to stunning whole-home transformations, and from family-oriented townhouse communities to luxurious custom-built estate homes, the Ovation Awards recognize the work of the in best new-home construction, renovation and design in Metro Vancouver. A complete list of 2017 Ovation Award finalists can be viewed at ovationawards.ca.

AMBLESIDE/CONTRIBUTED

FortisBC Award for Excellence in Energy Efficiency in New Residential Construction Finalist: Blackfish Homes for *Ambleside*

This home not only has plenty of west coast charm with natural wood finishes, it also is a finalist for the FortisBC Ovation Award for Excellence in Energy Efficiency in New Residential Construction. Rated BuiltGreen Platinum Energuide 82, the home features a gas fired Combi-Boiler with in-floor radiant heat. A large covered area off the kitchen allows for year-round outdoor cooking and seating. This overhang functions as a late day solar shade for the large glazing facing the west yard to prevent solar gain. Air conditioning is not required thanks to smart design of windows, and solar powered, timed venting skylight above the main staircase.

Best Townhouse/Rowhome Development (In-Fill) Finalist: Project Mint Developments Ltd for *Pender Duplex*

A cohesive blend of urban minimalism and warmth, this infill duplex finalist project has a split-level design with sunken kitchen featuring 12-foot ceilings and 32-inch deep counters, creating additional working surface. White quartz island/eating bar connects directly to wall at level of living-room floor, maximizing seating space. French-doors provide connectivity between kitchen/dining area and outdoor patio.

The front foyer is designed with practicality in mind - wide enough to accommodate baby-stroller turn-around. Large automated skylights provide ventilation, with upper section of living-room's 12'x3' bay windows angled for winter solar heat gain. Including on-demand water and in-floor heating, this home is not only well designed it is built to an impressive Energuide 82 rating.

Shaw Peoples' Choice Award; Best Residential Multi-Family Community Finalist: Hayer Builders Group for *Summit/Phase 1*

Replicating a single-family house with a split level design, this townhome is built to appeal to growing-families who want a unique home. Transforming typically wasted rooftop space, rooftop patios create over 327-square-feet of additional, private living space, for year-round outdoor entertaining. The community's 900 square-foot free-standing 'Social Lounge' features additional amenities to extend your family's living space too. Add in side-by-side parking garages with ample space for storage, this is truly a unique townhome.

Just one of four finalists in the Best Residential Multi-Family Community category, this year consumers can have a say too. Check out shaw.ca/ovation to view all four finalist projects and cast your vote! Winners will be announced April 29th at the Ovation Awards Gala ceremony.

Best Townhouse/ Condominium Renovation; $300,000 and over Finalist: maison d'etre design-build

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SUMMIT/PHASE 1/CONTRIBUTED

PENDER DUPLEX/CONTRIBUTED

inc. for *On a Clear Day*

Removing the wall between the kitchen and living room created visual connectivity, with areas defined by seismically attached drop-ceiling lighting panels, which conveniently hide the electrical upgrade in this older condo renovation. Matching wood is used for the mantel and island, with a stainless-steel fireplace and kitchen drop-ceiling wrap to complete to overall look and feel. Efficient heating is achieved with mix of radiant heat, and resized baseboard heaters, plus a bio-fuel fireplace, which requires no venting, for added warmth and feel.

Complete with wine fridge, two freezer drawers, and cooktop with down-vent, the kitchen island also functions as the dining table with space-saving seating and integrated footrests for added comfort on both sides. Smart-home automation controls heat, dimmers, audio, blinds; plus an 'all-off' exit button to lowers blinds for control of solar gain.

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"It's not 100 per cent, but I definitely would like to": Jarome Iginla, 39, isn't quite ready to call it a career

Fleury swoops in to save day for Pens

PITTSBURGH-COLUMBUS

Backup goalie gets nod after Murray injured before game

Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 31 shots in a surprise start in place of injured Matt Murray and the Pittsburgh Penguins opened their Stanley Cup title defence with a 3-1 victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets on Wednesday night.

Murray was scheduled to get the nod in the playoff opener but was a late scratch after suffering a lower-body injury during warm-ups. Fleury withstood an early push by Columbus, and the Penguins responded by pulling away from the untested Blue Jackets.

Phil Kessel had a goal and an assist for Pittsburgh. Nick Bonino and Bryan Rust also scored, and Evgeni Malkin assisted on Rust and Kessel's goals in his first game back after missing the final three weeks of the regular season because of an upper-body injury.

Matt Calvert scored for Columbus in the third period, and Sergei Bobrovsky made 26 saves.

Game 2 is Friday night in Pittsburgh.

Fleury spent most of the season gracefully receding into the background while Murray took over as the No. 1 goalie after helping lead the Penguins to a championship last spring.

Penguins goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury makes one of his 31 saves on Wednesday night against the Blue Jackets' Scott Hartnell. GREGORY SHAMUS/GETTY IMAGES

GAME 1 In Pittsburgh

3	1

Rather than deal the career wins leader in franchise history at the trade deadline for depth elsewhere, Pittsburgh general manager Jim Rutherford held on to Fleury, confident the club would need Fleury's services at some point.

That point came about 20 minutes before the opening faceoff, when Murray appeared to tweak something while stretching to make a save during his usual pregame routine. Enter Fleury, who spent the first period single-handedly keeping the uncharacteristically flat Penguins in it.

The Blue Jackets, making just their third playoff appearance in franchise history, insisted they wouldn't be overcome by the stakes or the stage. For a long stretch at the start, they weren't. Columbus outshot Pittsburgh 16-3 in first period, peppering Fleury and hogging the puck.

Fleury's steady play helped Pittsburgh survive before scoring each of its three goals in the second period.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OTTAWA-BOSTON

Marchand, Bruins strike for early edge

GAME 1 In Ottawa

2	1
BRUINS	SENATORS

Brad Marchand scored the winner late in the third period as the Boston Bruins beat the Ottawa Senators 2-1 on Wednesday night to win Game 1 of their Eastern Conference quarterfinal series.

Frank Vatrano, playing his first NHL playoff game, also scored for the Bruins. Tuukka Rask was solid, making 26 saves.

Brad Marchand GETTY IMAGES

Bobby Ryan scored the lone goal for the Senators as Craig Anderson stopped 23 shots.

Marchand scored on the rebound of a Patrice Bergeron shot with 2:33 remaining in regulation to make it 2-1, shocking the sellout crowd of 18,702 at Canadian Tire Centre.

Trailing 1-0 to begin the third period, and not having registered a shot since the first period, the Bruins had two quick ones and made the second one count as Vatrano beat Anderson from the high slot as Dominic Moore created the screen to tie the game at 4:55 of the third.

The Bruins had a scare when Colin Miller left the game early in the second after being hit by Mark Borowiecki. With an already depleted blue-line the Bruins can hardly afford to lose another defenceman. Miller returned to the game later in the period.

Game 2 of the series takes place Saturday afternoon in Ottawa. THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Hitchcock heading back behind Stars' bench

Ken Hitchcock is returning to Dallas and will be named the Stars' coach at a news conference Thursday.

A person with direct knowledge of the situation confirmed the hire of the 65-year-old, who won the Cup with Dallas in 1999, coaching there for parts of seven seasons from 1995-96 through 2001-02.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lundqvist and Rangers hold Habs off scoresheet

Tanner Glass scored in the first period and Henrik Lundqvist made 31 saves as the New York Rangers defeated the Montreal Canadiens 2-0 in the opening game of their NHL playoff series on Wednesday night.

Game 2 of the best-of-seven series is set for Friday night at Bell Centre.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dortmund bus bomb suspect arrested

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Islamic radical in custody, Dortmund lose 1st leg to Monaco

German authorities arrested a suspected Islamic extremist Wednesday in their investigation into a bomb attack on a top German soccer team, while the team — missing a defender wounded in the blasts — lost 3-2 to Monaco in a hastily rescheduled Champions League match.

Amid heightened security, the defeat for Borussia Dortmund in Europe's top club competition came less than 24 hours after three explosions shattered a window of the team's bus and rattled nerves across the gritty city in western Germany.

Dortmund coach Thomas Tuchel said after the loss that he felt European soccer's governing body, UEFA, had not taken the attack seriously enough as it swiftly rescheduled the match.

"We weren't asked at all at any time," Tuchel said. "Basically, we had the feeling that we were being treated as if a beer can had hit our bus, and half an hour later the decision was there that (it would be) tomorrow at 6.45 p.m.. That gives you a feeling of powerlessness."

Armed police officers in body armour patrolled the streets around Dortmund's stadium Wednesday night as locals and visiting fans mingled in a subdued atmosphere. Fans were banned from bringing backpacks to the match and some were frisked — with security officials even checking under their hats.

Earlier in the day, Frauke Koehler, a spokeswoman for German federal prosecutors, said investigators are focusing on two suspected Islamic extremists in the bus attack and searched their homes, arresting one of them.

As the investigation continued, the match delayed by the blasts got underway. Dortmund was without Spanish central defender Marc Bartra, who underwent surgery for injuries to his wrist and arm after the three devices packed with metal pins detonated close to the team bus Tuesday night. Clearly missing Bartra in defence and possibly still shocked by the attack on their bus, Dortmund conceded two goals in the first 35 minutes.

The team fought back after the break, to make it 2-1 in the 57th minute before Kylian Mbappe scored his second in the 79th minute for Monaco. Shinji Kagawa cut the deficit in the 84th minute, but it was not enough to save Dortmund from defeat. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

QF. RESULTS

B. Munich 1, R.Madrid 2
A. Madrid 1, Leicester 0

Borussia Dortmund fans chanted Marc Bartra's name during the game. The defender was injured after bombs exploded near the Dortmund team bus Tuesday. GETTY IMAGES

CFL

Orridge steps down as commissioner

Jeffrey Orridge's tenure as CFL commissioner was a short but tumultuous one.

The league dropped a bombshell Wednesday by announcing Orridge and the CFL's board of governors mutually agreed to part ways effective June 30. The stunning development comes just over two years after Orridge was hired amid much fanfare as the first African American chief executive of a major North American sports league.

Jeffrey Orridge THE CANADIAN PRESS

No official reason was given for the move, but in a statement Orridge said he and the CFL's board of governors didn't see eye to eye on the league's future. Orridge succeeded Mark Cohon, who spent eight years on the job. THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Manfred makes push to eradicate Chief Wahoo logo
Baseball commissioner Rob Manfred has made his strongest comments on wanting the Cleveland Indians to eradicate their logo. Manfred has talked to Indians owner Paul Dolan for years about abolishing the divisive symbol. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Raps serve notice to Cavs
Jonas Valanciunas made his first career three-pointer and the Toronto Raptors closed the regular season with a 98-83 win on Wednesday night over the Cleveland Cavaliers, who didn't play their "Big 3".

Norman Powell scored 25 points for the Raptors. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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3	8	2	6	1	5	4	7	9
7	9	6	4	3	8	1	5	2
1	5	4	9	7	2	8	6	3
9	2	5	3	8	4	6	1	7
8	7	1	2	9	6	3	4	5
4	6	3	7	5	1	2	9	8
5	4	8	1	2	7	9	3	6
6	3	7	8	4	9	5	2	1
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MAKE IT TONIGHT

Tex-Mex Grilled Chicken with Corn and Black Bean Salad

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

The freshness of lime marinade coupled with the fibre-rich salad make this a healthy, satisfying dinner.

Ready in 30 minutes
Prep time: 10
Cook time: 20
Serves: 2 - 3

Ingredients
- 2 chicken breasts
- 2 cups (475 ml) fresh or frozen and thawed corn kernels
1/2 cup finely chopped red onion
- 2 cups (475 ml) no-salt-added cooked black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 red bell pepper, cored, seeded and diced
- 1/3 cup (80 ml) cilantro leaves, finely chopped

Marinade
- ¼ cup (60 ml) olive oil
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) fresh lime juice
- 1 Tbsp (15 ml) honey
- pinch salt and pepper

Dressing
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) fresh lime juice
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) olive oil
- 1 tsp (5 ml) honey
- Pinch salt and pepper

Directions

1. Preheat grill. In small bowl, whisk together your marinade ingredients.

2. Use about 2/3 of it to coat chicken on a plate.

3. Rinse onions in cold water, drain and place in a large bowl along with the black beans, red pepper and cilantro. Whisk together the dressing ingredients and pour over black bean mixture. Stir in the corn.

4. Grill chicken 10 minutes over medium/high heat. Turn over and grill for another 10 minutes.

5. Serve chicken with corn and black bean mixture. Top with cilantro and a squeeze of lime.

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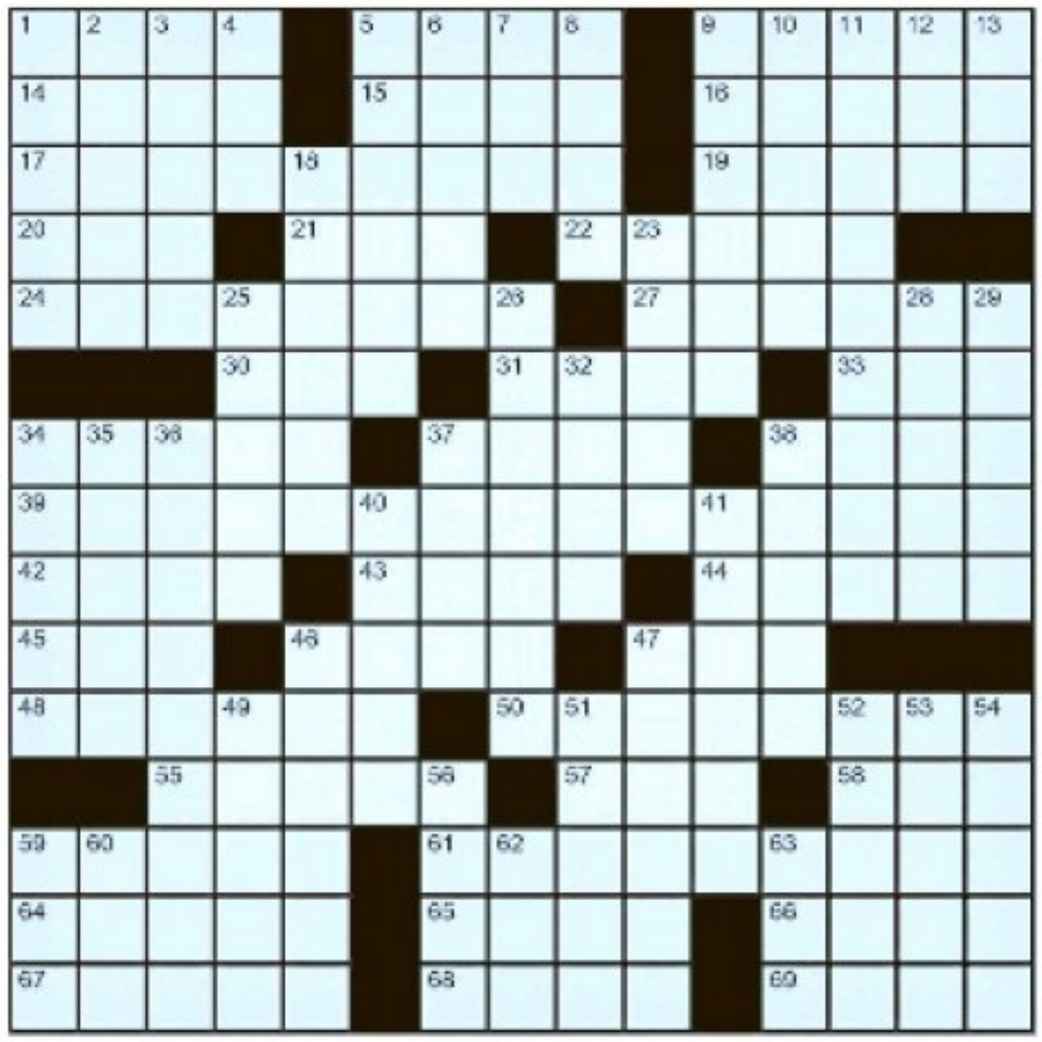
CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. She-chickens
5. Wonky
9. Montreal 'morning'
14. Farm song bit: "Here __, there..."
15. "Begone!"
16. "Bust __" by Young MC
17. Inspirational, like feel good movies
19. Recorded
20. Full amt.
21. Allow
22. Bitter
24. Derelict buildings, perhaps
27. The Kennedy Center __ (Performing arts achievement awards)
30. Play on words
31. Genghis __ (Mongol emperor)
33. Rap music's Kim
34. Titanic passenger, John Jacob __ IV (b.1864 - d.1912)
37. Dining room table lengthener
38. Other
39. Saskatchewan village: 2 wds.
42. Fossil fuel form
43. Red __ (Spicy cinnamon candies)
44. American author, Fannie __ (b.1885 - d.1968)
45. Legendary bird
46. Quasi
47. Director Mr. Pollack, to pals
48. Famously low-in-carbs diet
50. Contributes one's point of view: 2 wds.
55. Daggers
57. Apricot-like fruit
58. Alphabetic trio
59. Entertain, as a comedian
61. Premium knitting supply
64. "Finding Vivian __" (2013)
65. "Heat of the Moment" band
66. Horse speed
67. Paul who famously sang "Nessun Dorma"
68. Mr. Danson's
69. Parched

DOWN
1. High, in Hull
2. Drained of liquid
3. __ prosequi (Not proceeding, in law)
4. "__ heard..."
5. 'Backward' at sea
6. Canadian flag hues, red and __
7. Mr. Howard
8. __ mat
9. __-of-honour
10. Mightily, archaically
11. Highest money amount: 2 wds.
12. "__ had it!" (Enough!)
13. Mr. Beatty
18. Cake shop supplies
23. Fray
25. Go bad, as milk
26. Variant-spelled doubter
28. Hazards
29. Rain/snow mix
32. Triumphant laughs!
34. Capital of Ghana
35. "Darn it!"
36. Athleisure attire
37. Weaving machine
38. Dodge
40. Guess Who's "__ Eyes"
41. Poetry features
46. Scoundrel's 'smiles'
47. "The Lion King 2: __ Pride" (1998)
49. Map detail
51. Muggy
52. Gooey campfire treat
53. The Koh-_-__ Diamond
54. "Cape Fear" (1991) star Nick
56. Blinds strip
59. Guitarist's blaster
60. Psychedelic rocker's jacket
62. Peer Gynt's mother
63. Kilograms and pounds, for short

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
You will be impulsive and spontaneous today, because you have a strong desire to do your own thing. Feelings of freedom make you want to set your own boundaries and determine your own course.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
This could be a restless day for you because you will rebel against anything that restricts you. You do not want to be confined or held back by rules. (Yes, you feel rebellious.)

Gemini May 22 - June 21
A friend might surprise you today by doing something quite outrageous. Or perhaps you will meet someone new who is outrageous. Either way, it's fascinating.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
You do not want people telling you what to do today, especially bosses, parents and teachers. You want to call the shots.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
You have your own ideas about religion and politics and do not want others to try to dissuade you. You also might impulsively travel somewhere today.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Discussions about inheritances and shared property might suddenly change today. You might want things to be different, or perhaps somebody else does. Be alert to whatever happens, because it might surprise you.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Friends and partners are unpredictable today. They will either surprise you or respond to you in a surprising way.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You want the freedom to do your own thing at work today. You also might want to introduce reforms and better ways of doing things. Why not?

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Dealing with children might be challenging today, because they want control over their actions. Likewise, romantic relationships will be full of surprises.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
It's hard to predict how a discussion with a parent or an authority figure at home will go today. You don't want anyone telling you what to do. You also want to break free of routine. (This will be interesting.)

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You're full of bright and clever ideas because you can think outside the box. For sure, your daily routine will change. Stay flexible.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Watch your money today, because things are unpredictable. You might find money, or you might lose money. Keep your eyes open.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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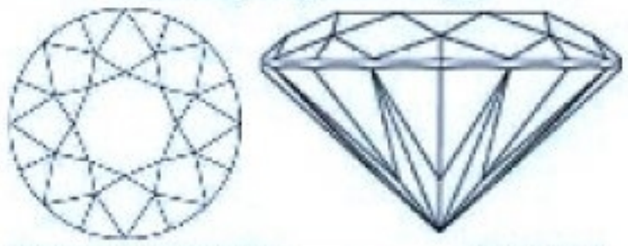

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